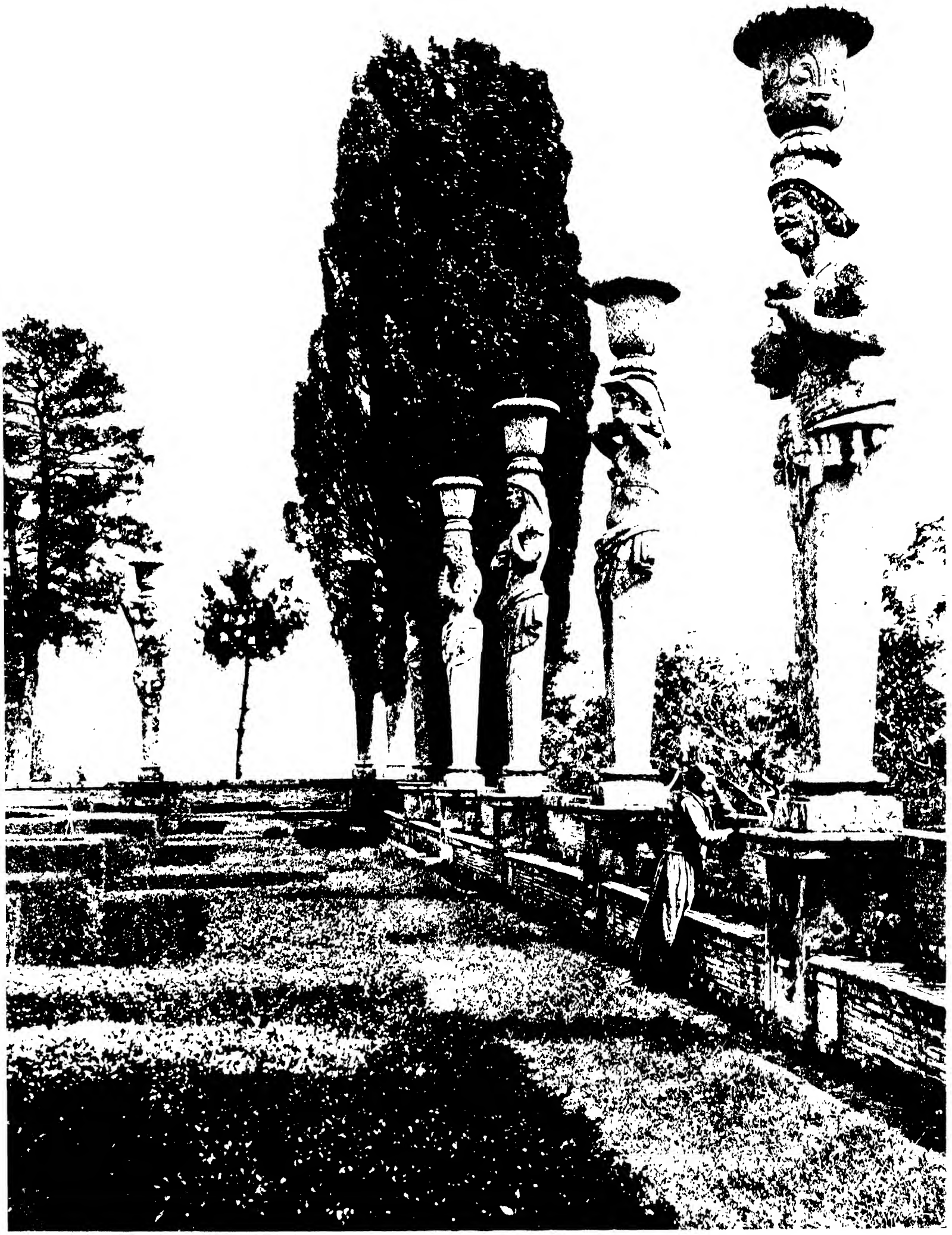
THE GARDENS OF ITALY



THE · GARDENS OF ITALY

BY · CHARLES · LATHAM

WITH · DESCRIPTIONS · BY
E · MARCH · PHILLIPPS

DEDICATED
BY · SPECIAL · PER
MISSION · TO · HIS
MAJESTY · THE · KING
OF ITALY

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VILLA FARNESE,
CAPRAROLA.

FROM the broad plain of the Sabina, out of which Soracte rises in sudden isolation, the road ascends up the steep slope, ending in a long, straight street leading through the little town, getting steeper and steeper, till right in front, towering in tremendous grandeur, the famous palace of the Farnese sits enthroned against the hillside, built upon huge, rock-like bastions which give it almost the effect of a fortress.

The country-side here owned the Orsini as lords about the year 1200. The Farnese first came into notice in the fifteenth century with Cardinal Alexander Farnese and his two legitimatised sons, Pier Luigi and Ranuccio, and soon gained splendour from the power and influence of Giulia Farnese, the mistress of Pope Alexander Borgia. Paul III. finally established the fortunes of the House when he became Pope, in 1534; his grand ideas of nepotism being his most distinguished characteristic. He created his nephew, Prince of Parma and Piacenza, and adding other Church lands, summed up the whole in the dukedom of Castro, and until the death of Pier Luigi, in 1547, the ducal residence was in Ronciglione. It appeared, however, to be more in the interests of the House that its representative should live in the centre of this part of the estates, and Pier Luigi's eldest son, Cardinal Alexander II., was therefore encouraged to build the palace of Caprarola. "It is Vignola's great work," says Ferguson. "The plan is unique, or nearly so, being a pentagon enclosing a circular court. . . . The object of adopting this form was to give it a fortified or castellated appearance, as all citadels of that age were pentagons." The five-sided plan gives the singular effect of two angles from every point of view, and the balustraded terrace and ascent, with what was formerly a drawbridge, give it an appearance of impregnable strength and solidity.

The entrance admits to a circular court set round with pillars, and a magnificent round staircase leads to the upper floor, from which open all the state rooms, decorated by the brothers Zuccaro, Tempesta, Pietro Bernini (the father of Lorenzo), and other minor artists. The three Zuccaro brothers came from Urbino, in 1543, with the hope of emulating their great fellow-townsman, Raphael, and their talent satisfied the taste of the day for decorative work to an extent which procured them all the custom they could desire. They constituted a sort of firm which became known as the Zuccari. Taddeo was thirty-seven years the elder, and his is the best work. He lies buried in the Pantheon, with the epitaph written by his brother Federigo, "In death and in art resembling Raphael." We need not quarrel with this definition, but content ourselves with admitting the appropriate feeling for decoration which has given such a rich, gay, and attractive appearance to these great halls, where pictures relating to the power and grandeur of the Farnese are set in frameworks of stucco looking like delicate lace, and airy and graceful "grotesques."

These pictures are full of interest here, where all is so suggestive of the Farnese. The walls of the great Council Chamber have frescoes of all the towns that belonged to them, Parma, Piacenza, Castro, Vignola, Scarpellino, Capo di Monte, Camina, Ronciglione, Fabrica, Isola, and Caprarola. The chapel has old stained-glass windows. Another hall, "the Hall of the deeds of the Farnese," is given up to the great events of the House. The marriage of Orazio Farnese with Diana, daughter of Henry II. of France, is represented, and that of Ottavio with a daughter of Charles V. All the characters in these and the other scenes are portraits, and in stiff gowns of gold brocade, or brocaded doublets and thick hose and ruffs, we see Catherine de Medici, Henry of Navarre, the Great Constable, the Dukes of Guise and Nemours, Mme. de Montpensier, and Mlle. de Rohan. Alessandro and Orazio are seen accompanying Charles V. on a campaign against the Lutherans; and in the bearers of the canopy held over the Emperor's head we have portraits of the three brothers Zuccari. Paul III., who took such care of his family, is shown appointing Pietro Farnese Commander of the Papal Forces, and Orazio Governor of Rome. Ranuccio receives the Golden Rose from his uncle, and the Pope himself is portrayed presiding at the Council of Trent, making peace between Francis I. and Charles V.,

and giving the lucky hat to four Cardinals, who all afterwards became Popes. In several of the scenes, among all the other portraits, we distinguish the pale, sensitive face, with short brown beard, of Cardinal Alexander II., the builder of the palace.

In the Hall "del Mappamondo," the azure ceiling has all the constellations, the twelve signs of the Zodiac, and set round in twelve delicately-moulded stucco frames, are the fables relating to these signs. On the walls are figures symbolising Italy and Rome, the mistress of Christianity. Others typify the tropics, the four quarters of the globe, while over doors and windows are the heroes of geographical science, Amerigo Vespucci, Marco Polo, Columbus, and Cortes.

Besides these principal halls, there are many smaller. The most attractive are four named after the seasons, which show some of the best work of the Zuccari. The ceiling of the "Spring" room is painted with a beautiful nude figure, with worshippers at her feet. Above her head the signs of the Zodiac are placed so as to be caught by the rising sun. Garlands and sylvan scenes surround her. On the walls are the Rape of Europa, the combat of Hercules and Antæus, and the specially-appropriate myth of Persephone, wandering with Demeter through the daffodil meadows of Enna. In the "Summer" room, which is disposed so as to be as cool as possible during the sultry season, groups of agriculturists, reaping and cooking, and leading teams of white oxen, surround the symbolical nymph. A very happily-utilised fable is that of Phaeton, child of Apollo, who, having obtained his father's leave to drive one of his chariots, turned his four horses out of the usual course, with the result that the world was burnt up by the excessive heat, so that Jove, indignant, flung the chariot and driver into the Po in the form of lightning, whence originates the "summer lightning" that plays among the clouds on hot nights.

"Autumn" has vines and fruits, intoxicated bacchantes borne by satyrs, the birth of Bacchus, the wine-god returning from a trip to the Indies, having Indian houris among his attendants, and again one of those quaint and little-known myths is illustrated; Bacchus, trampled underfoot by tyrant Titans, crushed to death, his limbs boiled over a fire, suddenly reappears, more comely than before. So was typified the vine, crushed and squeezed and fermented for wine, and the scattered branches once more throwing out leaves and bearing grapes. In the "Winter" room, a solitary male figure represents the season. Circles of children shivering with cold, warming themselves at fires, frozen rivers and leafless branches, form the setting. The gods hold a council over the proposed destruction of the world, Vulcan binds Boreas, and Eolus, god of the winds, holds aloft a flag, while the clouds part after a terrible storm.

A room at the back of the palace leads out on to a bridge which crosses the moat and opens into the garden. Round four angles of the five-sided palace, stretches a broad raised walk, from the walls of which you look sheer down into the moat, far below. Huge statues in pairs representing the seasons stand sentinel on these walls, and cypresses tower between them. Ten of these cypresses were planted at the time the palace was built; only four or five now remain, but these have grown to enormous size, and in some places have forced their way quite through the wall, and overhang the space below. The first plateau at the back is a formal garden of considerable extent, with clipped box hedges, grottoes, fountains, and a fine open belvedere from which to gaze out at the far-stretching plain below. When Sebastiani, a garrulous and admiring chronicler, who lived in the little town, published a pamphlet on it in 1741, the lake in the middle of the lower garden was filled with fish, the fountains played without ceasing. In the middle, a huge lily, the crest of the Farnese, formed of lead, sent up a shower of water, which rose with such vehemence that it burst in fine clouds of spray, in which the sunbeams produced a rainbow.

Against a retaining wall at the back is a spacious grotto, worked in stucco, somewhat shabby and decadent nowadays. Its walls are sustained by six sylvan figures of gigantic size; within sit groups of nymphs, playing on musical instruments. A huge vase spouts water in the centre. The pavement once showed a design of white lilies on a darker ground of marble. This grotto was the favourite private retreat of his *Serenissimo*, Cardinal Odoardo Farnese, who succeeded Cardinal Alessandro, and lived here the greater part of the year. The garden is kept up in a somewhat perfunctory manner, but roses riot in masses over the walls—great splendid blooms of royal crimson, sheets of Fortune's Yellow, huge creamy tea and shell-like pink against the dark cypress green.

From the formal garden a wood of plane trees slopes gently up for some distance. On a May morning the ground underneath the tender greenery is carpeted with wild flowers—orchis, iris, saxifrage, cyclamen, and Solomon's seal. Through an avenue of Scotch firs, we reach the upper pleasure-ground, laid out some seventy years later by Cardinal Odoardo Farnese (the only part of the grounds with which Mr. Latham's photographs deal). Here he has given us the immense fountain basin, with broad stone edge, in which the water is of a deep blue colour, very striking against the rich dark green of the avenue of firs leading up to it, and one slender jet of water springs from the Farnese lily. Above, is the ascent, enclosed in arched and grottoed walls, between which comes an aqueduct formed of the twisted bodies of dolphins, down which the water rushes, rippling and swirling in a thousand shell-like waves. At the top, recline the "Giants"; two river-gods pouring water from stone cornucopiæ. Everywhere the silver-grey, porous stone is softened

with the dainty maidenhair fern and enriched with golden mosses. Perhaps the most beautiful of all Mr. Latham's illustrations are the two which show us the entrance to the heart of the garden, the low flight of four curving steps, flanked on either side by groups of figures. This is the garden of the Hermes and Caryatidæ. On one side stands the Casino or summer-house, a small villa, having three stories to the east and one to the west. It contains three or four rooms on each floor, and a gaily-frescoed loggia looks out, both on the east and west fronts. The peculiar distinction of this garden consists in the twenty-eight giant stone figures which stand round it on three sides, and which, interspersed with tall cypresses, have a picturesque stateliness such as can hardly be matched elsewhere. Each one is different, with a beautiful natural variety: some stand in couples, whispering together; a faun blows a conch shell into his companion's ear, who wards off the sound with his hands; another plays Pan's pipes; one nymph, with her hands thrown up behind her head, seems to lean lazily back in a cypress bower; others clasp young birds or bunches of grapes; over all Time has flung his hoary charm. They stand out high and erect, and are seen against the melting blue of the far distance. A double stairway, rich in dolphins and sea-beasts, leads to the remains of another garden behind the Casino, where still stands a slender fountain and a graceful semi-circle of fountain gateways, and from this one passes into the woods again. The upper part of the grounds is left to run wild, except that the box hedges are cut.

It is impossible adequately to describe the charm of this high and lovely garden. It is in extraordinarily good preservation, and this is the more striking, that there is not the slightest sign of any restoration. As the photographs show, the carving of the stonework is as clear and well-cut as ever. Look at the detail of the mouldings of the east and west stairways, the bold and grotesque dolphins of the cascades. The whole garden has a look of weird melancholy, almost magical in its effect, and forlorn as it is, is yet more beautiful in its solitary silence than it could have been in its hour of magnificence.

The west of the garden terminates in the stables, erected for Cardinal Alessandro, from Vignola's designs. There is stabling for sixty horses. Overhead is a corridor, in the form of a cross, which divides four airy rooms, and on a higher storey is accommodation for the grooms and coachmen.

One of the most striking features of the castle is the massive wall which entirely surrounds it and the grounds. It is about three miles in circumference, a solid bastion of masonry, descending into a hollowed-out, moat-like channel, from which the land slopes up on the opposite side. The grounds are therefore absolutely isolated and unapproachable, and can only be entered from the castle and by one other gate. In the Cardinal's time the woods at the back were full of deer, wild boar, and game, and miniature hunting parties often took place.

The splendour of Caprarola was short, and for more than a hundred and fifty years now it has been practically untenanted. In the days of Cardinal Alessandro and his successor Odoardo great state was kept. In 1596 there was a theatre in the garden, and Liberati's play, "Gli Intrighi d'Amore," was acted here. After Odoardo's death the ducal seat was moved to Parma, and by 1650 much of the beautiful furniture had been taken there too. The male line became extinct in January, 1731, with Antonio Farnese, Duke of Parma, and Caprarola was left as dowry to his niece Elizabeth, who had married Philip V., King of Spain and Naples. By command of these monarchs, the whole palace was put into thorough order, the doors and windows repaired, and the roof entirely renewed and supplied, at great expense, with lead conduits. This accounts in great measure for the good condition in which the palace remains. The Queen conceded its use to Cardinal Acquaviva, Archbishop of Monreale, Protector of the Two Sicilies and in Rome, the vigilant Minister of His Majesty the King of Naples. Acquaviva also did a good deal in the way of restoration, mending stucco ornamentation, retouching and protecting the decaying frescoes, and refurnished the whole, in a style which the somewhat fulsome Sebastiani pronounces to be "worthy of his great soul." He entertained continually, summer parties of princes, clerics, and nobility, in what, to quote our chronicler once more, "was esteemed the most artistic, commodious, and best decorated palace in the whole world." It still belongs to the ruined Bourbon family.

Many are the noble guests who have been entertained here. San Carlo Borrommeo stayed for a few days in 1580. It was on that occasion that he made the speech to the Cardinal that I have already quoted (Villa Lante); but even he was penetrated with the loveliness, and said to his host, "What must Paradise be like!" Gregory XIII. was the guest of Cardinal Alessandro in 1585. His attendant cardinals were lodged in the rooms over the stable, from which a special passage was made, communicating with the main building. The Chief Magistrate and all the citizens were at the gates to present the keys and to pay their homage to the Vicar of Christ, who in return presented the silver cross borne by his cross-bearer and a noble chalice to the cathedral, where they are still preserved, besides blessing the town and its inhabitants from the palace windows and enriching them with copious Indulgences. Among the attractions of the stately pageant was a procession of a hundred maidens, dressed in white, carrying olive branches and clashing cymbals. Cardinal Odoardo was the host of Clement VIII., and Sebastiani gives an account of a visit paid by Queen Christina of Sweden, in December, 1655, when she stopped at

Caprarola, with a splendid suite, on her way to Bracciano, and was magnificently entertained by Duke Ranuccio. A feast and fireworks were given in her honour, she was shown all over the palace, and remarked of the Sala di Mappamondo that it deserved to be kept under a glass case, and, gazing from the windows of the Hall of Hercules, lost in wonder at the beauty of the prospect, exclaimed, "I dare not speak the name of Jesus, lest I should break the spell."

The Anno Santo 1700 saw the flying visit of the reigning Duke, Antonio, Prince of Parma, the last direct descendant of the great Farnese House. His vassals, who scarcely knew him by sight, assembled to greet him, wild with delight and loyalty. He was moved to tears, made a touching speech, and went his way, to be seen no more at Caprarola.

The exiled James Stuart was welcomed royally by Duke Francesco in 1714, and as the Duke took leave of "His Majesty, the King of England," he declared that the palace had acquired fresh lustre from his august presence. In October, 1739, Kasimir Vasa, Prince of Poland, and the Elector of Saxony, paid a visit, *incognito*, to Cardinal Acquaviva, and were shown the castle, where a choice assemblage of *savants* and Jesuits had come to meet them. One of the last notable guests was Prince Charles Edward, the Pretender, who was a visitor in 1740, and Sebastiani, who mentions his coming, was overpowered at the honour of being allowed to house some of the Prince's suite.

After 1750, for a hundred years or more, the place was utterly neglected. A steward was placed in charge, and was so little overlooked that he became bold enough to sell the whole of the piping of the fountains, 96,000lb. of lead, besides making away with much of the old furniture and tapestries and cutting down timber. Now, the administration has gone to the other extreme, and the place is guarded as if every tourist were a conspirator in disguise. To avoid disappointment, it is well to say that no one should go without an order, obtainable at the Farnese palace in Rome; a special one is needed to see the garden, and yet another in order to sketch. The *custode*, it may be added, is absolutely incorruptible.

Among the past records of Caprarola is a love story, pretty and idyllic enough. In 1645 Innocent X. had made a cardinal of Camillo, the son of Olimpia Pamphili. Don Camillo was then only twenty-three, and two years later fell deeply in love with Olimpia Aldobrandini, the beautiful young widow of Prince Borghese. He was a Cardinal "not in orders," and therefore confessed to the Pope that "much as he admired the virtue of chastity, he felt himself unable to practise it without the help of a wife." The Pope, who, we may presume, attached less importance to the virtue than to the revenues of the Cardinalate, was furious, and did all he could to change the young man's resolution. There was a great deal of family consultation and interchange of correspondence, but Don Camillo got his way. He and Olimpia were married in February, 1647, and at once set off for Caprarola, where, to the "great astonishment of all Rome," they spent the whole spring and summer, which that year was unusually long and hot. Donna Olimpia was twenty-four, "beautiful, ingenuous, and full of spirit and amiability, and, in spite of some feminine weaknesses, had all those gifts which can ensure domestic felicity."

It is charming to imagine the delight of that long summer in this enchanted garden, while all their artificial and mannered world marvelled at their taste. The memory of them has a tender charm of its own beside all the records of state visits and solemn splendour.

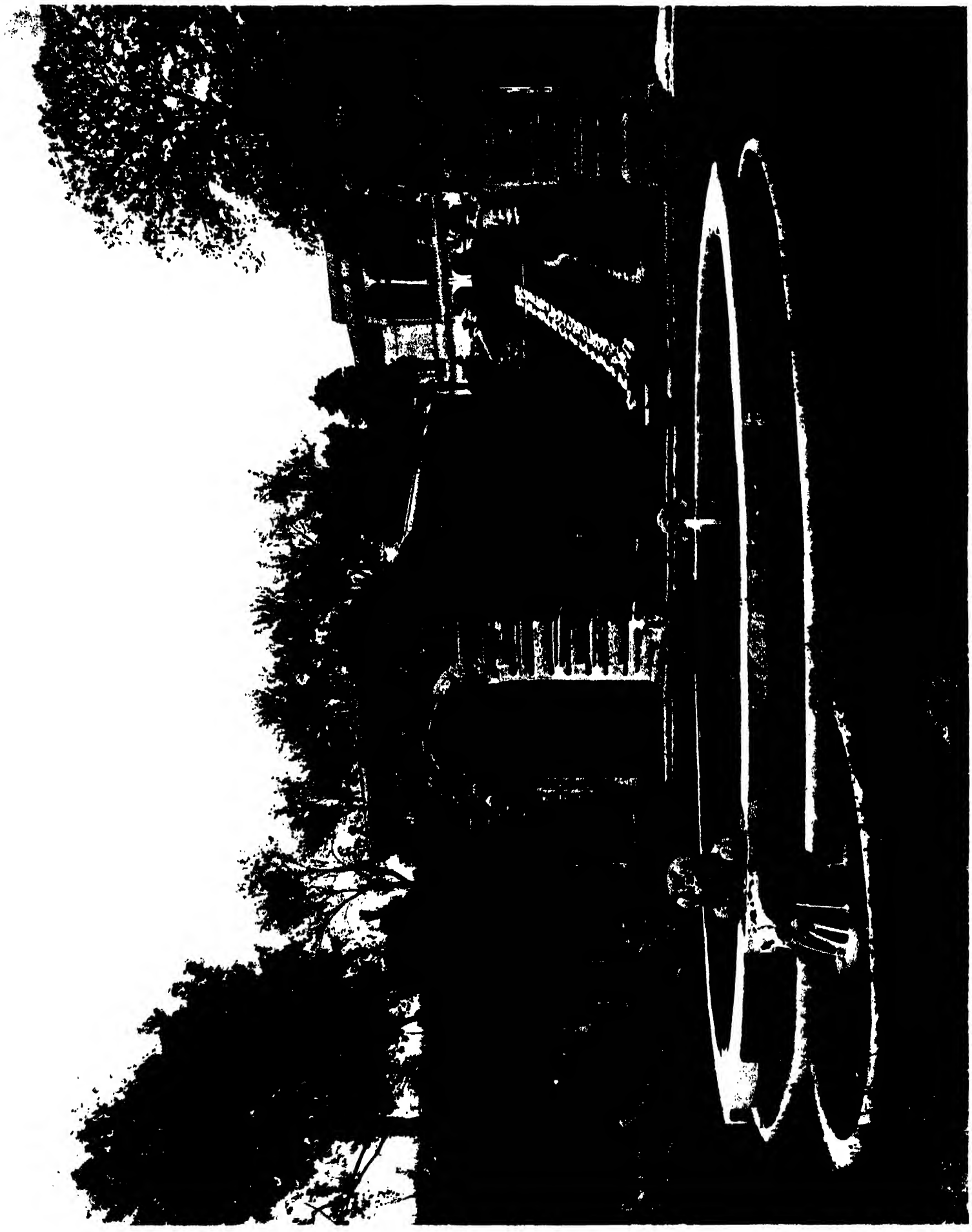
> "Here there was laughing of old, there was weeping,
> Haply, of lovers, none ever may know,
> Whose eyes went seaward, a hundred sleeping
> Years ago.
> Heart handfast in heart, did they stand? 'Look hither,'
> Did he murmur? 'Look out from the land to the sea,
> For the foam-flowers endure when the land-blossoms wither,
> And men that love lightly may die, but *we* . . .'"

Only, instead of the sea, there are the soft waves of the campagna.

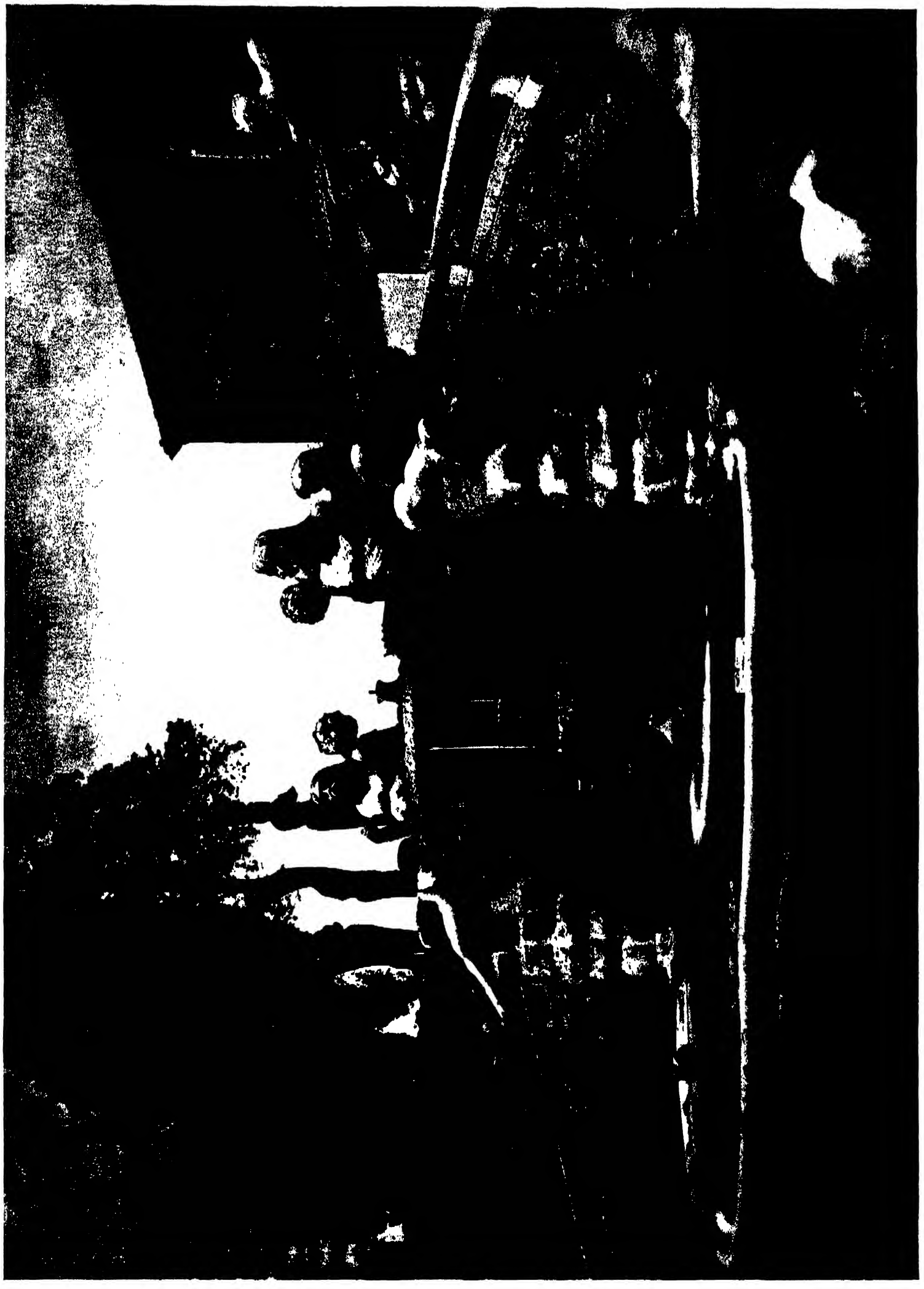
Caprarola must be grim and dreary enough in the winter-time, or when wind and rain storms sweep across the plain. It is a place for halcyon days and happiness. Who, nowadays, builds anything so grandiose, so useless—and so beautiful?

TERRACE OF THE HERMES.

THE OUTLET

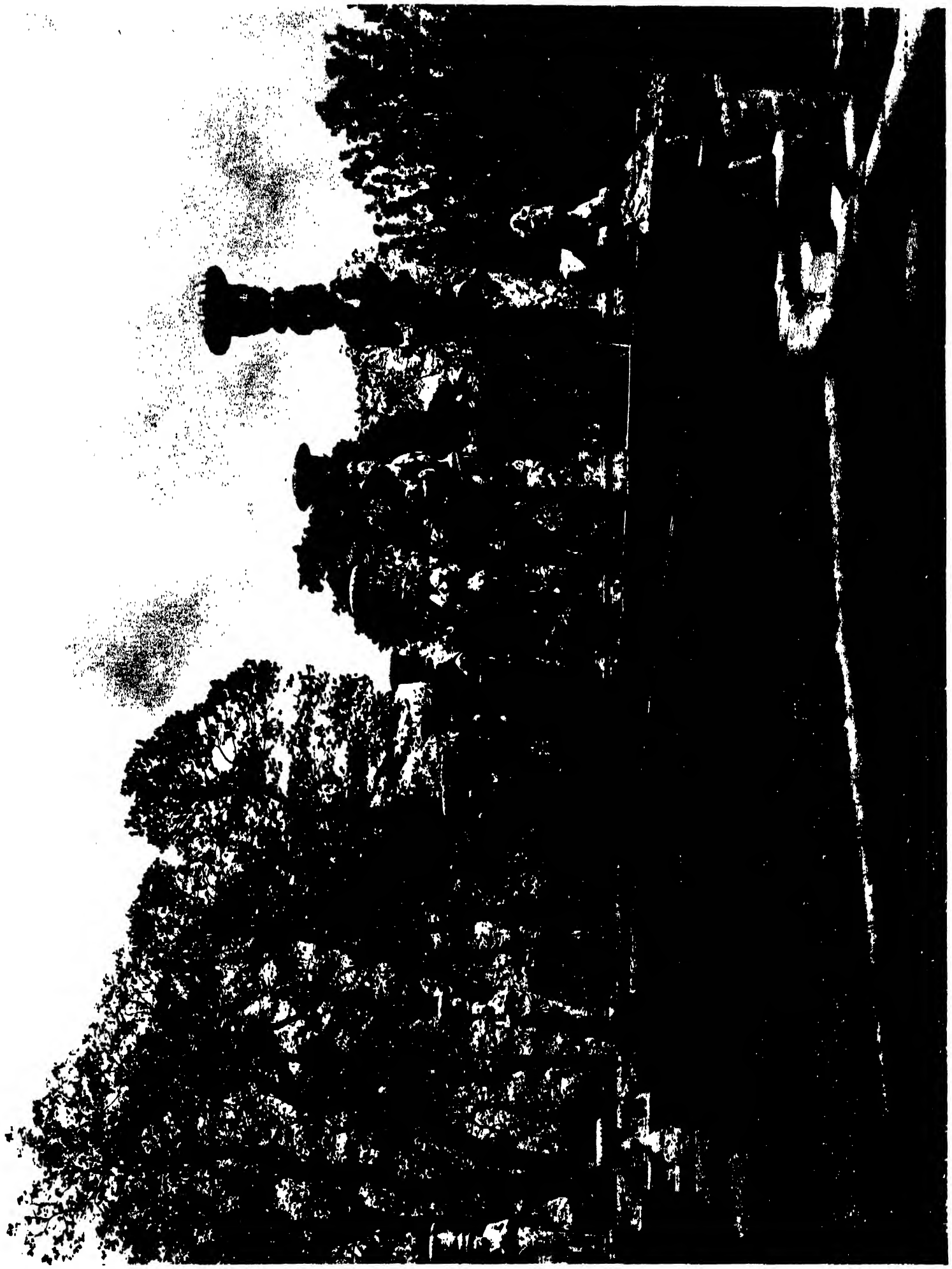


THE SOUTHERN ENTRANCE.



THE GIANTS' GOBLET.

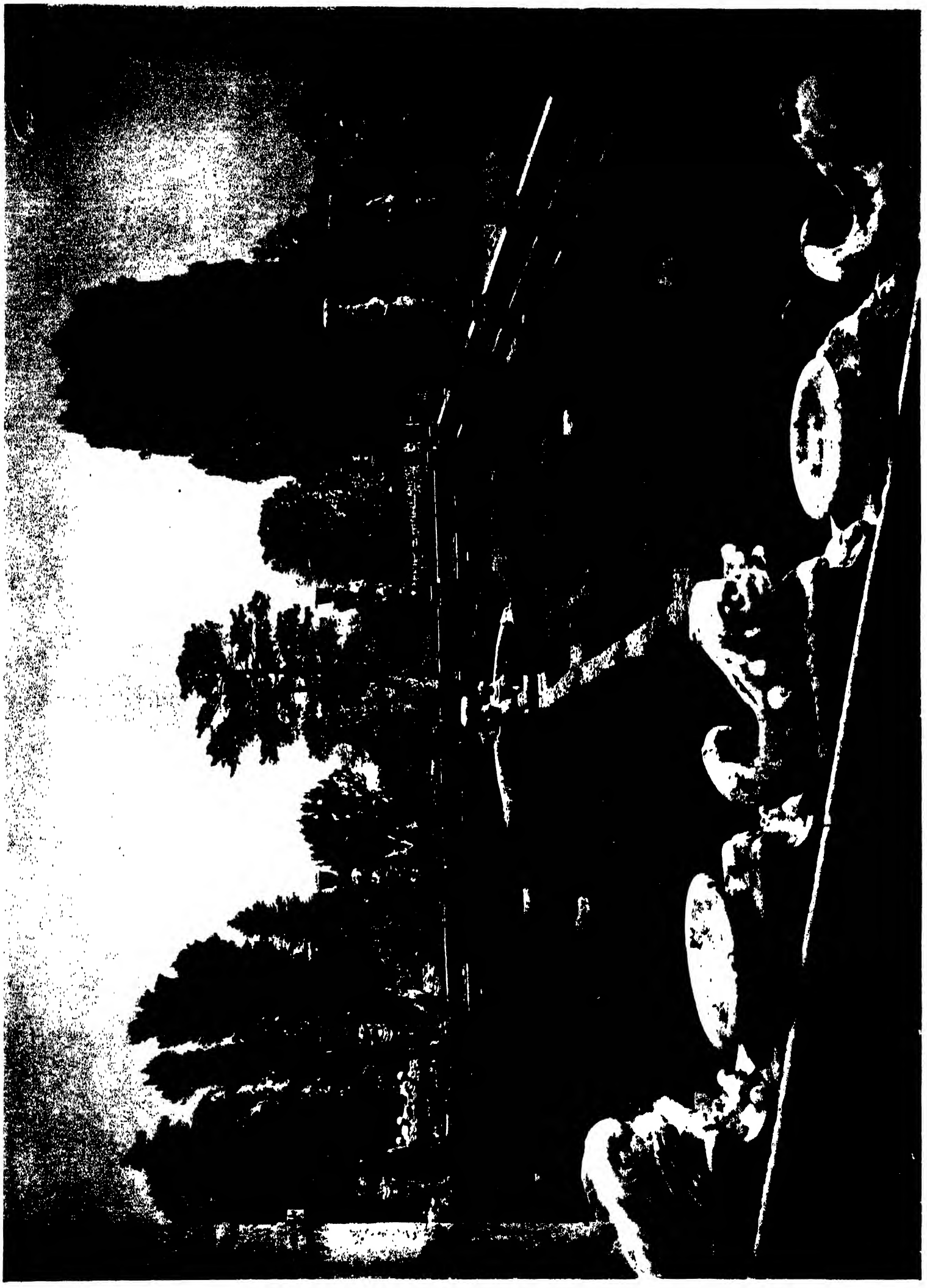
VILLA FARNESE.



HERMES ON THE SOUTH TERRACE.

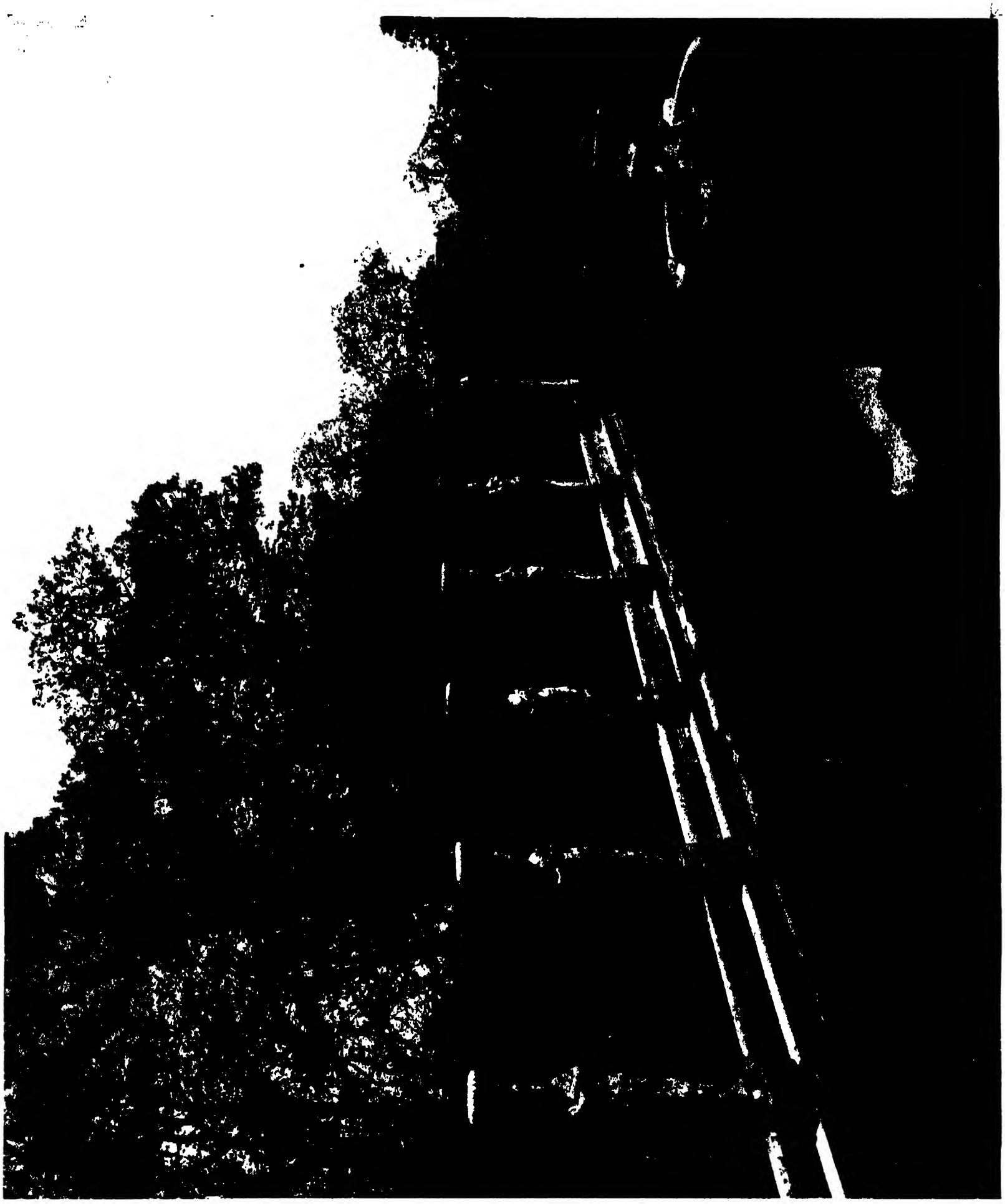
THE WESTERN STAIRWAY.

VILLA FARNESE.



THE WESTERN HALF OF GARDEN.

VILLA FARNESE.

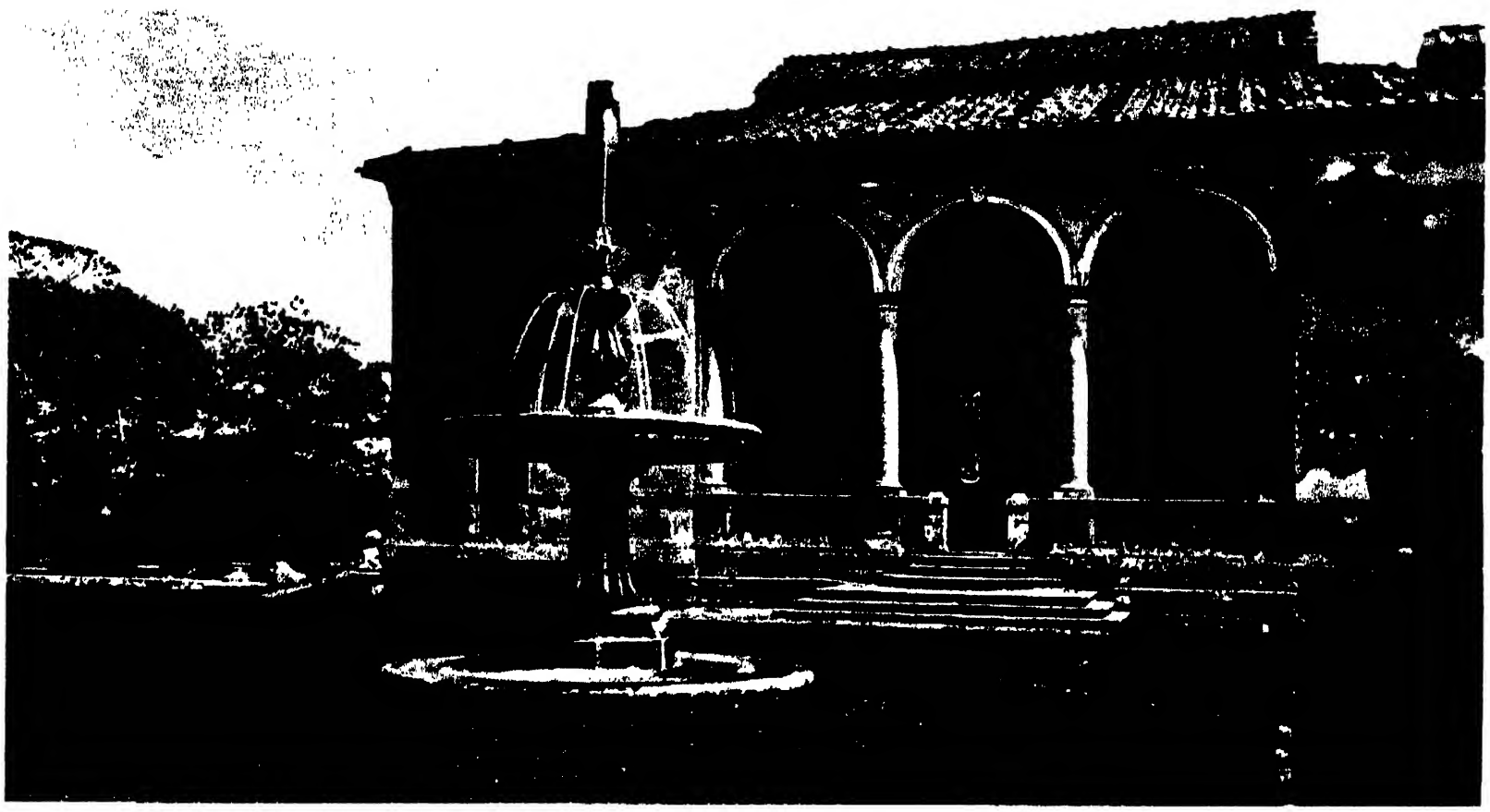


VILLA FARNESE.

THE OLD FOUNTAIN GATEWAYS.

VILLA FARNESE—THE SOUTHERN EDGE OF THE GARDEN

VILLA FARNESE.



HERMES ON THE EAST SIDE

VILLA LANTE,

BAGNAIA.

FROM an old deed in the archives of Viterbo we learn that Bagnaia in the twelfth century was the property of the Lombard Counts of Castellardo, by whom it was given to the Commune of Viterbo. This deed was deposited by Christian, Archbishop of Mayence, Chamberlain to the Emperor Frederick I., in 1173. It was, in fact, restored by him to Viterbo, which had forfeited it as a fine for having destroyed the city of Ferento.

In the fourteenth century Ranieri, Bishop of Viterbo, was a mighty hunter. He used to hunt and hawk in the mountains round Bagnaia, and built himself there a little hunting-lodge, to which he could escape in the intervals of administering his See. That little lodge still stands, stout and solid, and forms the stable of the present villa. Through the stucco and whitewash with which it is covered, struggle the dim traces of a coat of arms, the heraldic device of Bishop Ranieri. The bishopric was a poor one, and the municipality of Viterbo, wishing its bishop to have an income more worthy of it, presently made over to the See the whole of the lands and township of Bagnaia, which became the country seat of its bishops, who one after another laid out and embellished the grounds.

In 1566 Cardinal di Gambara was elected to the bishopric. The craze for building villas was just reviving in Italy, and no villas were more beautiful than those which rose round Rome—the stupendous pile of Caprarola, the romantic scheme of Este, the lovely and lovable Lante.

Cardinal di Gambara employed the great Vignola, who was already at work a few miles off at Caprarola, and it is interesting, as illustrating the variety of which the famous architect was capable, to contrast the grandeur of the first with the imposing elegance of the second.

Vignola was pre-eminently the villa architect. Born 1507, he grew to manhood just when the craze for these dwellings was developing, and in Rome he was employed in no very great works by the State, but was free to devote himself entirely to the caprices of the great Cardinals and the Pope himself in their private pleasure-houses. Vignola's life and career were almost contemporary with those of Palladio, and the two together completed the first period of the Renaissance. During the half century that preceded their advent, the last traces of feeling for Gothic art had died in Italy, and the admiration for the classic was becoming more fixed and dogmatic. In the early days of the revival architects had not intended merely to copy: they were full of delicate and original fancy; but Vignola, from long and enthusiastic study of classic art, grew to believe that nothing else was worthy of study, and that the most exact imitation was to be aimed at. His work may in consequence sometimes seem rather cold and tame, but it is so correct, that it can only be criticised as classic work. Among his famous villas, after Caprarola, which is regarded as his masterpiece, are the villa of Pope Julius outside the Flaminian Gate and several small palaces in Rome itself. Ferguson points out that these are less remarkable for any striking features than for an entire absence of bad taste or false principles, which in that age is great praise; and this is certainly the case with Villa Lante, as we now call it. The house was designed to consist of two separate buildings, and simple as they are, they have all the beauty of proportion and delicacy of detail which distinguish this architect. It was when he came to the laying out of the garden that Vignola was able to give his genius some freedom, and he remains one of the very foremost of the garden designers of his age. The house, or rather villas, were planned in conjunction with a scheme of paths, water-tanks, balustrades, and fountains, forming a gay and charming garden, sufficiently stately, but airy and graceful in design, and not too fine to be a restful and attractive summer resort.

We can imagine the courtly old Cardinal gloating over the plans and watching the progress of the workmen with an impatient eye; but he was not destined to see the fulfilment of his dreams. Pope Gregory XIII., hearing much of the beauties of the villa, proposed to pay it a visit, and the Cardinal made extensive preparations to receive him. The first of the twin buildings was finished. Vignola's design for the gardens was partly carried out; but the Pope, not being able to fulfil his proposed intention, sent in his stead that meretorious

killjoy, San Carlo Borrommeo. The Cardinal showed him all over the estate, the new buildings, the grounds, and the woods, no doubt shaking in his shoes, and trying to minimise its splendours, San Carlo, looking and counting the cost, and thinking of the poverty-stricken *borgo* lying on the hillside below. His trenchant remark was rightly construed as an order and sentence: "The money spent on this would have been better employed in erecting a hospital for the benefit of the poor of Viterbo." Cardinal Gambara had not the wit of his neighbour, Cardinal Farnese, who, to such a stricture, replied: "I *did* give it them, but I made them earn it with the sweat of their brow." He accepted the reproof and suggestion with politic readiness; the second villa was not built in his day, but a hospital was raised in Viterbo, and a large sum of money spent upon the Cathedral. The house as he built it, is square and comfortable, a good, simple work of the Renaissance, with moderate-sized vaulted rooms. Outside it is of a beautiful mellow grey stone, in slight relief, with the Cardinal's armorial bearings, in which the crab (Italian, Gambara) takes a conspicuous place. The ceilings are decorated by the brothers Zuccari, and are in their most restrained and harmonious style. The Holy See made many requests to the Cardinal to make over his right in the property, which had been specially accorded to him by Pius V., but he persistently refused, and kept it as his own, living there and enjoying "his delight," as he called it, until his death in 1587. His successor, Cardinal Casale, however, agreed to bequeath it to the See of Rome, by whom in future it was lent to the Bishops of Viterbo.

As years passed, the magnificence of Cardinals became less liable to reproof, and no one thought of objecting when Cardinal Montalto, succeeding to the bishopric, at length carried out Vignola's plans and added the second villa. This, uniform outwardly with the first, consists inside mainly of reception and guest chambers; villa number one being reserved for the owner's own use. Neither is of more than one storey high, and the chief part of the second villa is devoted to a fine hall, which has a very beautiful ceiling by Zuccaro, in stucco, gilding, and fresco. It is in perfect preservation, and recalls the famous one of the Carracci in the Farnese palace in Rome. The framework is composed of large female figures in high relief, white and gold, with outstretched arms, joining hands, between which are set mythological scenes. The frieze introduces the armorial bearings of Montalto; a lion, and the pear tree of his maternal house of Peretti.

The imposing formal garden below the twin villas, had already been laid out by Cardinal Gambara, but it was reserved for Montalto to erect its crowning ornament in the magnificent central fountain, which for beauty and originality of design and position has hardly its equal in Italy. Four huge tanks are bounded by stone borders on which stand vases, and in the middle rises a group of splendid young athletes, who hold aloft the high mount, the "Monte Alto" of the Prince of the Purple. Against the blue distance the powerful figures are grandly relieved, black and gleaming. "Bronze," you say at once, but they are not bronze at all, but the finest, hardest travertine, which the sun and the water have well-nigh petrified into a material as hard as iron, and which it is difficult to believe is not really metal. Already in Canova's day the group had taken its present colour, and the sculptor marvelled at it, saying, as he tapped it with his hammer, "It will outlast marble." So one Prince of the Church succeeded another, and the ilexes grew taller and richer, till in 1656 Duke Ippolito of Lante laid a request before Pope Urban VIII. that he would grant him its use for three generations to compensate him for the loss of Villa Lante on the Janiculum, which the Pope had confiscated in order to build fortifications on the site. Neither Urban nor his successor, Innocent X., would agree, holding that the villa had been sacrificed for the public safety; but when Alexander VII. succeeded to the Papal Chair, the Duke of Lante obtained his wish in return for six *scudi* paid yearly on St. Peter's Day. The grant was renewed in 1743, and again later, and with some payment, the estate now belongs outright to this family, the representative of the Houses of Montefeltro and della Rovere, which has itself given four Cardinals and one Pope to the Church.

Various improvements are due to the Lante. When French gardening was brought into fashion, and Louis XIV. and Le Nôtre were setting the example of ribbon borders at Versailles, the Duke of that day brought a landscape gardener from France, who laid out the elaborate setting of box hedges and borders which surround the grand fountain. The poor man finished his work by drowning himself in its waters, for what reason tradition does not say. The guest chambers of the villa are hung with very handsome old French papers, some of the earliest ever made. They are manufactured in small pieces of about a foot square, hand painted, with a bold, gay pattern of birds and flowers, and are as bright as when they were new.

There are very gay records of the life here in 1820. The *châtelaine* then was Margherita Marescotti, wife of Don Vincenzo Lante. She was a leader of Florentine society, and gathered round her many gay and brilliant friends. Private theatricals and amateur recitations were the rage, and we can imagine the coming and going, the coaches swinging through the little town, the castle in the village below, packed, as well as the villa with guests, the *al fresco* entertainments, the wit and merriment through the long hot summer days and nights. An old print in Villa Montalto shows Donna Margherita, who is said to have been extremely beautiful in her youth, as a handsome, genial woman, scarcely of middle age, in a Josephine

dress of velvet, with a lace tucker and her hair in bunches of classic curls, sitting with her two little girls, who wear high-waisted, scanty frocks, and their hair *à la Chinoise*. Among the family papers are some of the old *libretti* which were used by the talented amateur company. Donna Margherita was a devoted friend of the Countess of Albany, and there is some tradition, though no actual record, of visits paid to the villa by the wife of the unfortunate James Stuart.

Nothing can be more attractive or more deftly planned than the garden, which develops from the formal and well-kept centre, with its artistic fountain nucleus, which is gay with flowers, to the sweep upwards and backwards, following the rise of the mountain, and spreading out on either hand by broad stairways, set with vases and bounded by stately balustrades, up to terraces and fountains and reservoirs, from which fantastic spiral canals of stone carry off the dashing water. It is all beneath the shadow of noble plane trees and giant ilexes. At the summit a delightful pleasaunce is reached, where a grand fountain "of the horses" is surrounded by circular seats of stone, mossy and crumbling, rich with the tints of time. Slender columns stand round, and on either hand is a frescoed pavilion. We can picture vividly the gay gatherings here in bygone days—the songs, the gaiety, the artificial manners, the real enjoyment, of all that light-hearted, frivolous Court life which grew up in Italy in the seventeenth, and lasted to the nineteenth, century. This pleasaunce is the culminating point of the garden proper, and above and beyond, it merges into deep ilex woods, with long alleys and woodland walks, and spaces where here and there, a lovely fountain covered with green moss, flings its slender silver shaft aloft into the cool shade, and where blue and white anemones and rose red cyclamen carpet the ground in spring. Still further beyond, the wide and shadowy woods lie all round Bagnaia, and stretch up the spurs of Monte Cimerio. These woods are full of game, and the Duke of Lante enjoys excellent sport in them.

The fountains have all names: there is the fountain of the Dolphin and of the Ducks, the fountain of the Chase and that of the Giants, the Chain Fountain and the Octagon; here, you see the insignia of the crab, and there that of the mountain, and again the three eagles of Lante. In 1772 Cardinal Marcello Lante made the grand entrance and erected a wrought-iron gate.

The grounds here are kept up carefully according to English ideas, with the taste which makes the formal part a blaze of flowers, and yet gives full value to the romantic and timeworn aspect of the whole. The present Duke is an artist of no small distinction, a fact which it is not difficult to discover in noting the way in which restorations and improvements are carried out.

An enclosure called the Duchess's Garden is, indeed, given up to the ravages of some wild boar, brought from the Pontine marshes; but as it is within high walls, and has no view, it is not to be regretted. The water was at one time diverted from the fountains by an earthquake, but has now been brought from the hills at great expense, and flows freely in every part. Some of the old rooms, which were formerly used for service, have been decorated in keeping with the rest of the villa, and the whole presents a wonderfully complete example of an Italian country house, still lived in for the greater part of the year by its owners, those owners who are the descendants of men who were among the great powers before the days of the Renaissance.

Those who gratefully acknowledge the generous kindness which throws these beautiful grounds open to visitors from many lands, in whose memory their loveliness must linger long, will not enjoy them less because they know that Villa Lante is still a home in the fullest sense of the word, that its owners love it devotedly, that little children, than whom none can have been more dear and winning, play where their ancestors played of old, and that (in this, happily, unlike those selfish days) the poor of the town below are no longer forgotten, but that the present Duke has well earned the title of *Pater Patriæ*, is Mayor of the town, enters into its joys and difficulties, and is well known and loved of his people. The thanks of the writer are due to the kind and learned chaplain of the household, the Rev. Don Bernardino Rezzi, to whom much of the information regarding the history of the villa is owing.

THE ISOLOTTO GARDEN.

VILLA LANTE.

VILLA GAMBARA.

VILLA LANTE.

CREST OF THE MONTALTO.

VILLA LANTE.

THE WEST GARDEN PATH.

THE EAST GARDEN PATH.

VILLA LANTE.

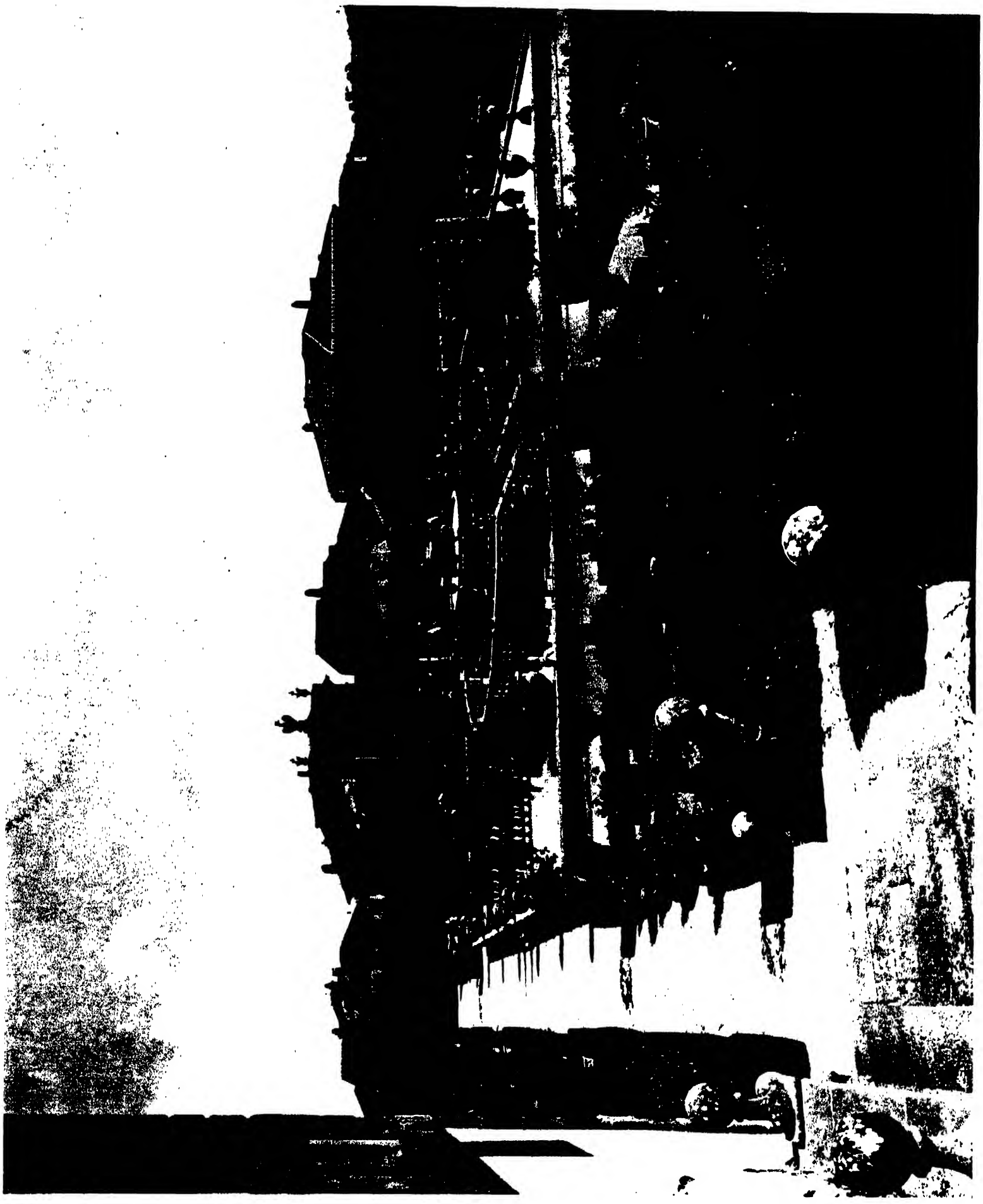
THE TWO VILLAS.

VILLA LANTE.

THE EAST VILLA.

INNER CIRCLE OF THE FOUNTAIN.

VILLA LANTE.

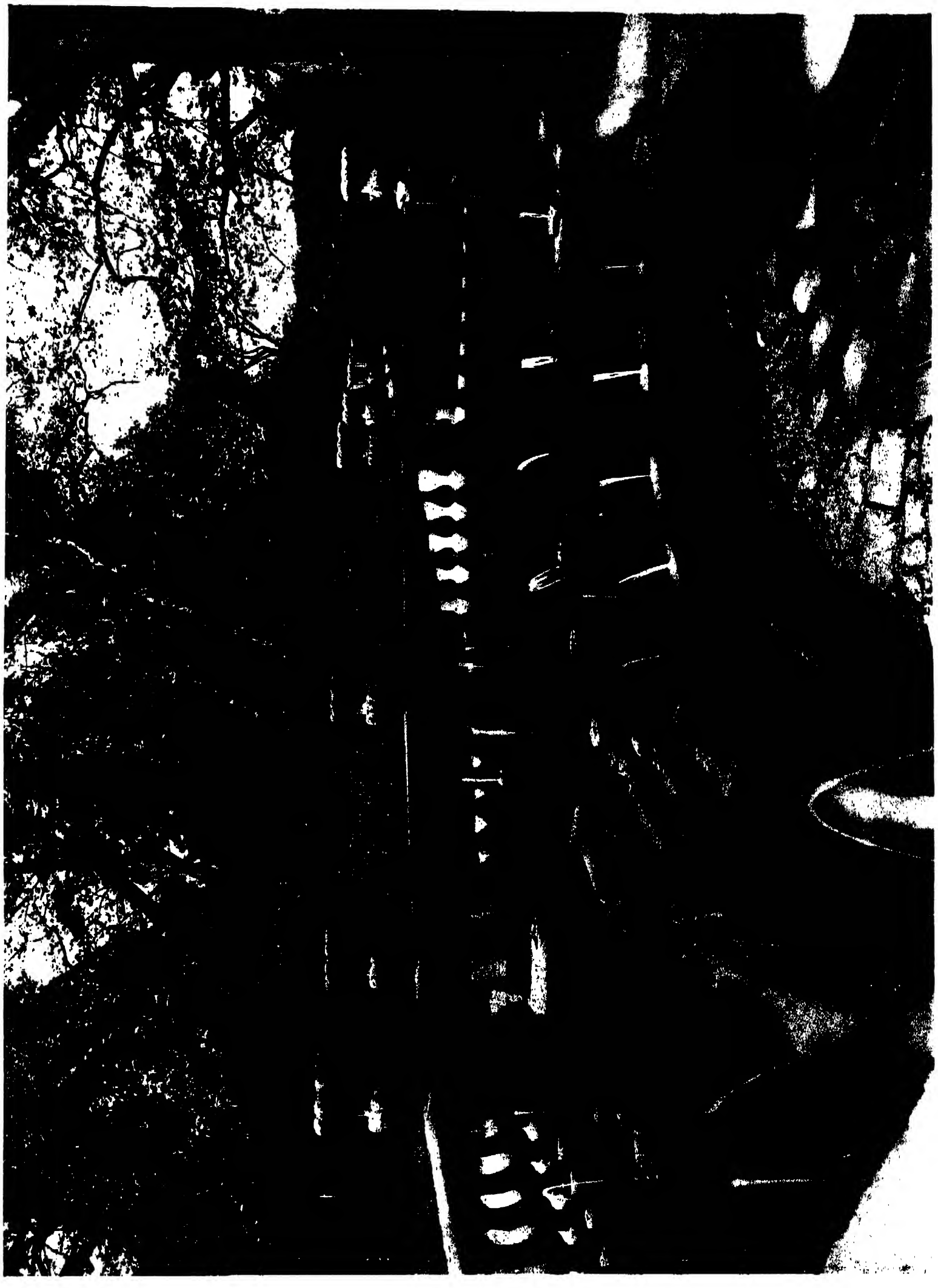


LOOKING NORTH.

VILLA LANTE.

FROM THE FIRST TO THE SECOND TERRACE.

VILLA LANTE.



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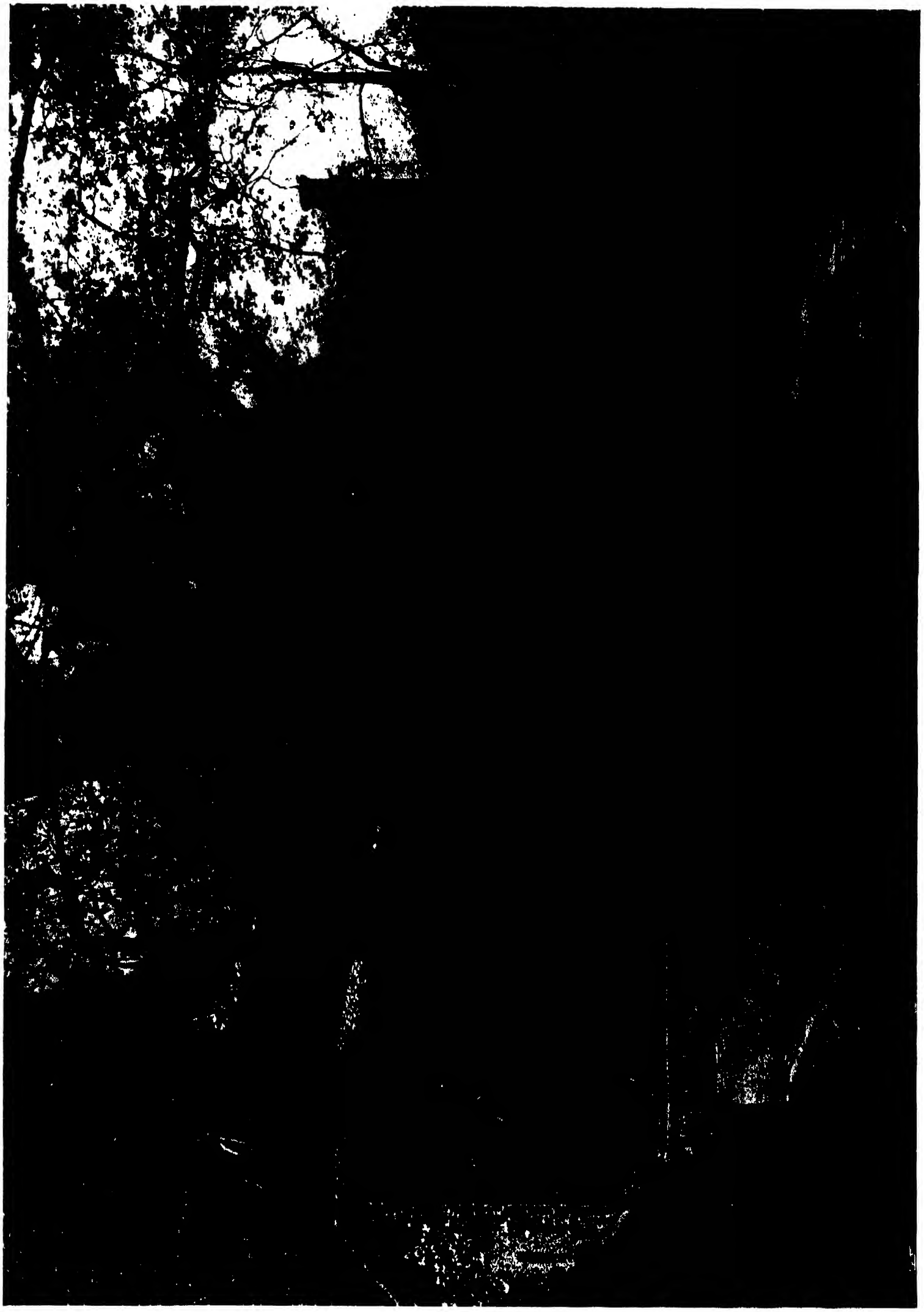
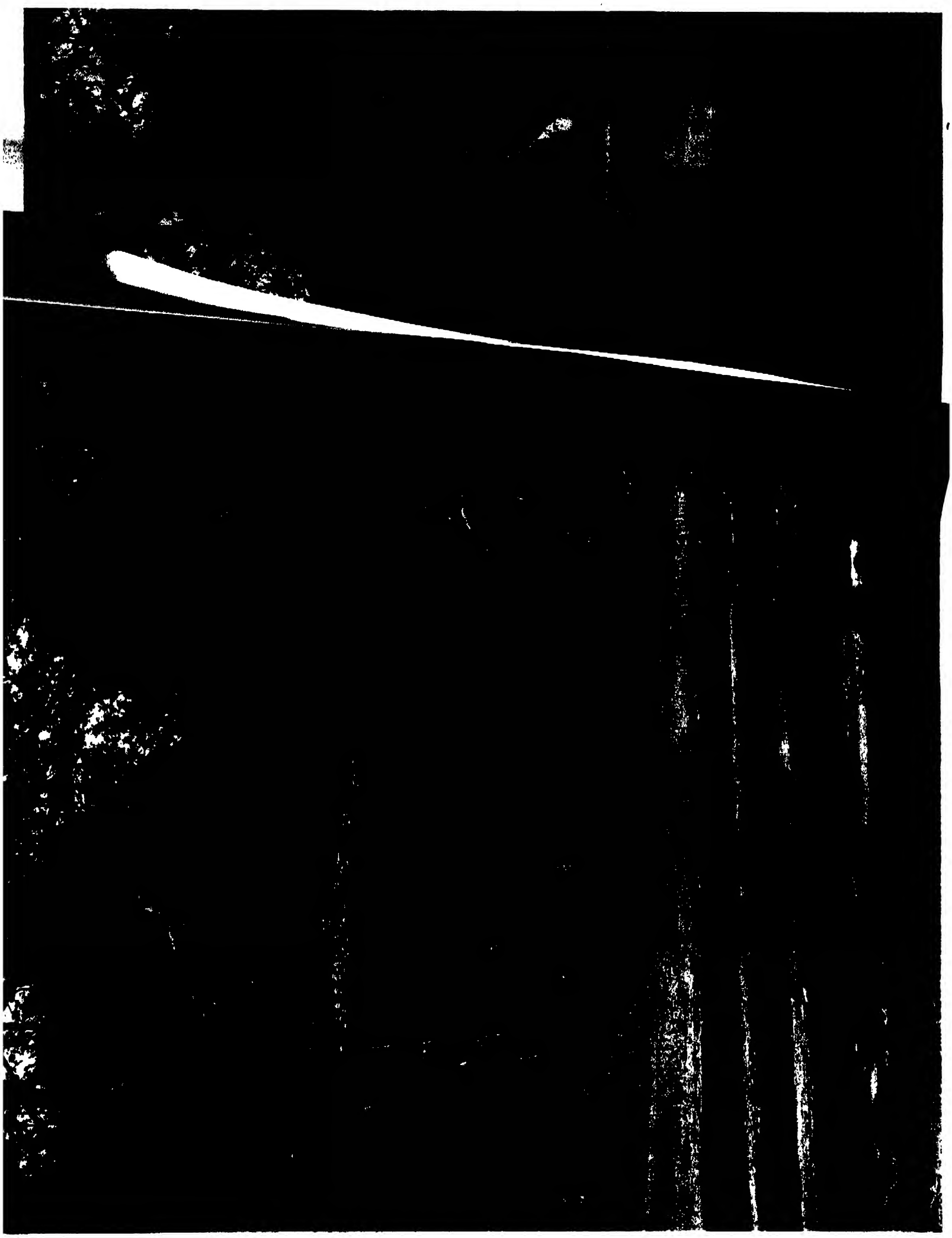
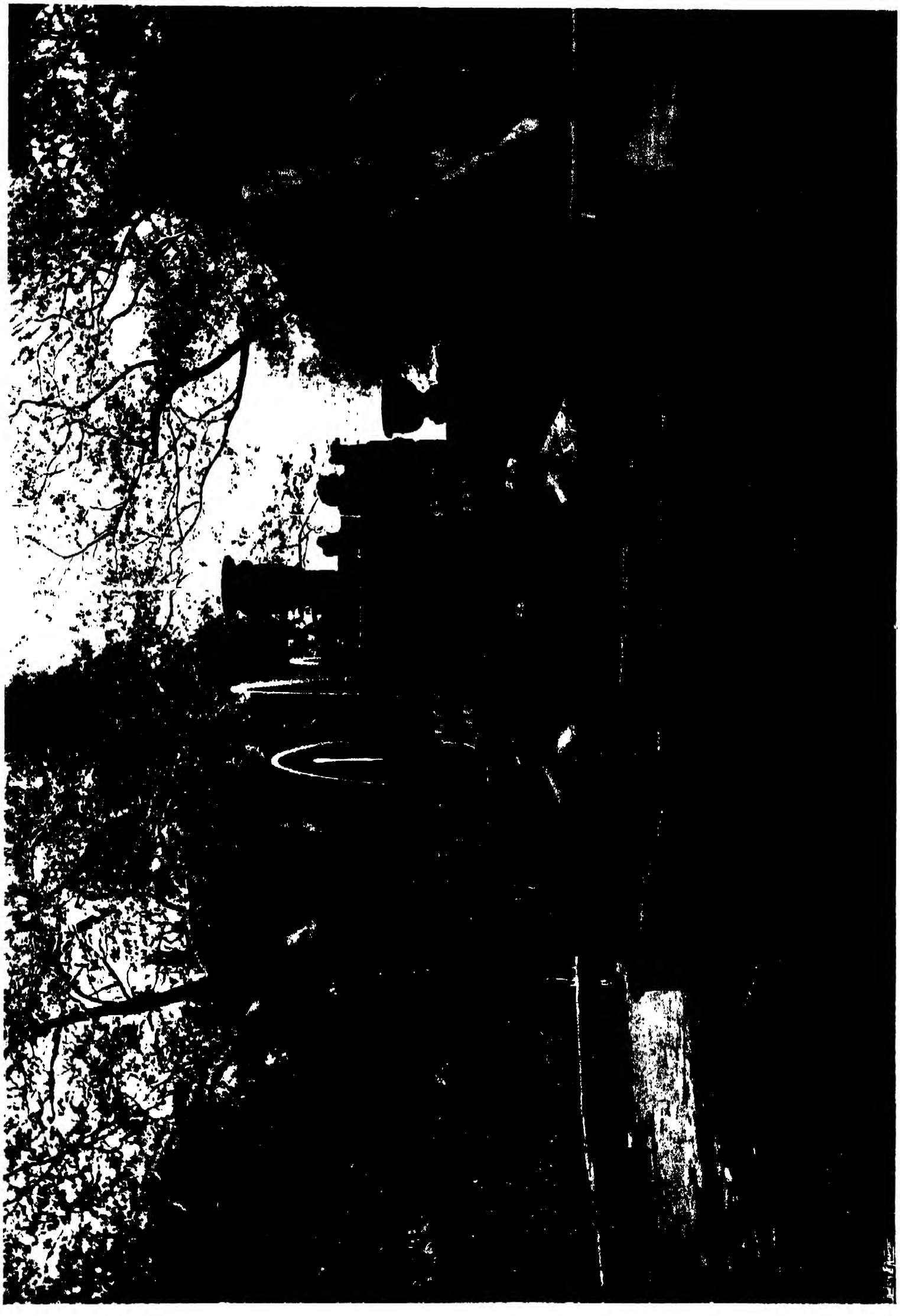
CANAL OF THE GIANTS' CASCADE.



IN THE CIRCLE—UPPER COURT.

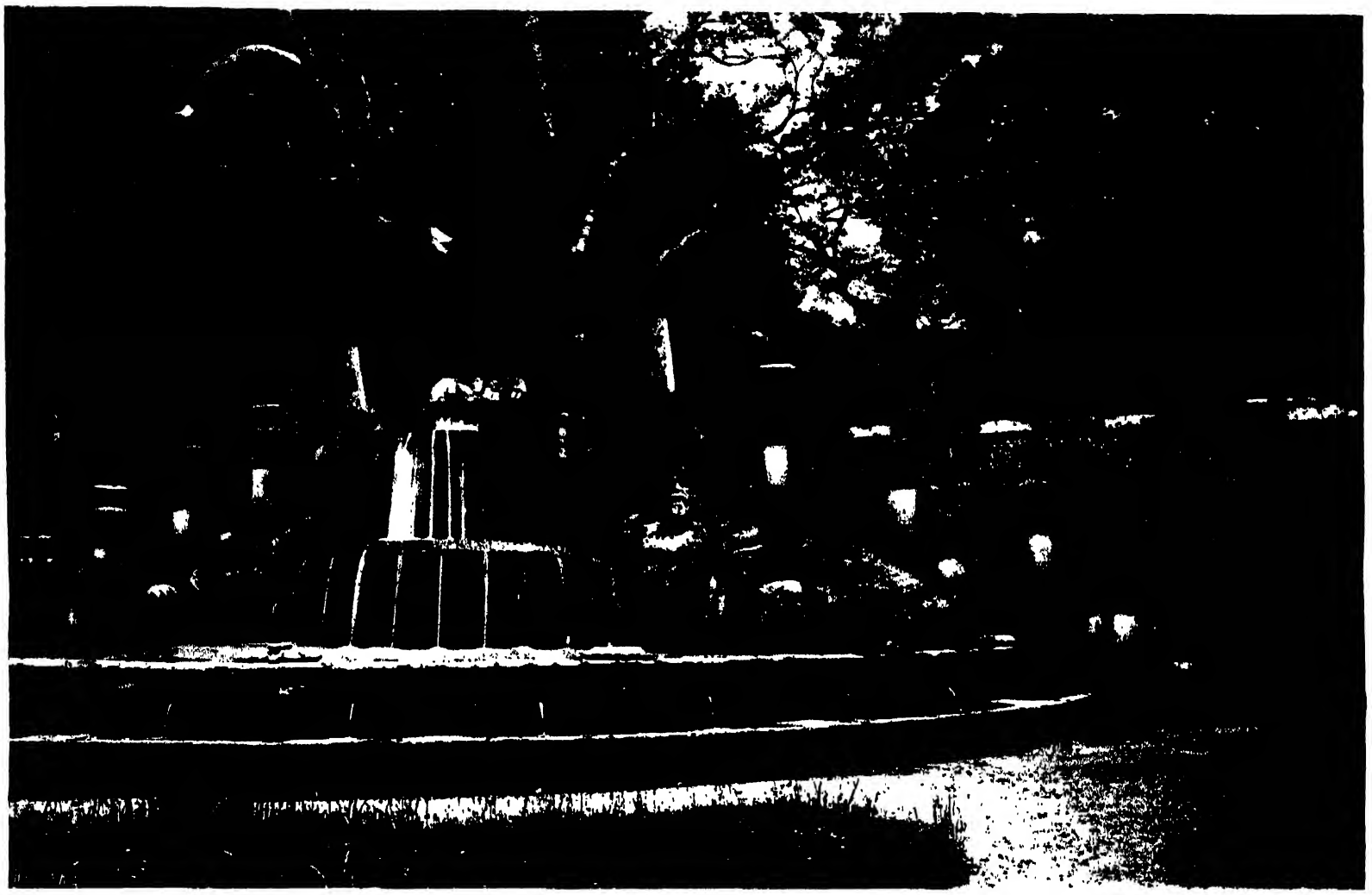
VILLA LANTE.





THE DOLPHIN FOUNTAIN.

VILLA LANTE.



FOUNTAIN OF THE RIVER

TWO WAYS TO THE FIRST TERRACE.

VILLA LANTE.

SOUTH WALK.

WESTERN FOUNTAIN TERRACE.

VILLA LANTE.

CANAL CASCADE—UP.

CANAL CASCADE

GARDEN PAVILIONS—UPPER COURT.

VILLA LANTE.

EAST STAIRWAY.

THE SECOND TERRACE.

VILLA LANTE.

THE NORTH WALK.

FROM THE ENTRANCE GATE.

VILLA LANTE.

NORTH GATE.

VILLA PALMIERI,

FLORENCE.

THE author of the immortal "Decameron," the founder of who can say how many modern novels, is believed to have been born by the river Mensola, near Settignano. The villa, which belonged to his father, has been identified by a contract of sale existing in the archives of Florence and dated 1336, when Giovanni Boccaccio was twenty-three years old. This villa, now called Villa Boccaccio, still lies on the hill above Villa Palmieri. Some old frescoes were found lately, in restoring it. All over this fertile land, which must have been almost as thickly studded with habitations in his day, as it is now, the romancer wandered, marrying fiction to reality. He wrote the famous volume of stories of the patient Griselda, of Romeo and Juliet, of Isabella and her pot of Basil; stories from which Chaucer and Shakespeare and Keats—and who shall say how many others?—have borrowed through the centuries. And, after more than five hundred years, it is still possible to identify the scenes in which he laid them.

Boccaccio was thirty-five the year the great plague came to Florence, where it ravaged and destroyed, and struck such terror, "that the laws of God and man were no more regarded." Some lived licentiously, some temperately, some fled from the city. There was no one to nurse the sick, and numbers passed out of the world without even a witness. In the country, the animals were left to roam at will, no one cared to reap the standing corn. Between March and July, a hundred thousand souls perished in the city alone. "What noble palaces were then depopulated to the last inhabitant, what families became extinct! What vast possessions were left, and no known heir to inherit them!"

He frames his tales in the device of a joyous company of seven ladies, "all discreet, nobly descended, and perfectly accomplished," who met in Santa Maria Novella, where they agreed to take their maids and to retire to the country seat of one or the other, and were speedily joined by three gentlemen, in whom neither the adversity of the times, nor the loss of friends, nor even fear for themselves, could stifle, or indeed cool, the passion of love. "They accordingly set out next day from the city, and, after they had travelled two short miles, came to the place they had already decided upon." This first halt has been identified as Poggio Gherardo, lying above Settignano. It is an old castellated house standing high above the plain. The entrance-hall is the Loggia mentioned in the Decameron: "The said place was on a small height, removed from roads on every side, full of various trees and shrubs in full greenery and most pleasant to behold. On the brow of the hill was a palace with a fine and spacious courtyard in the middle, and with loggie and halls and rooms, all and each one in itself beautiful and ornamented with jocund paintings; surrounded with marvellous gardens and with wells of coldest water and cellars of rare wines; a thing more suited to curious topers than to sober and virtuous women."

Here one of the ladies, Pampinea, was crowned queen, "with an honourable and beautiful garland of bays." Though this is a graceful fiction, Boccaccio had probably some real lady, a leader of Florentine society, in his mind. It was very usual to select some lady whose word for the time was law, and who settled the way in which the hours should be spent. Strolling in the country in philosophical discussion, and gathering at some spring or charming point of view to tell tales, were a part of the proceedings.

Here, then, the first series of those tales was supposed to be told; and the Mensola flowing below, is that "stream of clear water" to which the joyous company went slowly down to disport themselves at evening, barefooted and with bare arms, till they returned to the palace for supper, music, and dancing.

A fresh queen was chosen each day, and at the end of the second day, Neifile, being crowned, said, "As you know, to-morrow is Friday, and the next day Saturday, days apt to be tedious to most people on account of the viands ordered to be eaten; besides, Friday was the day on which He who died for our life, suffered His passion, and it is therefore worthy of reverence. For thus, I consider it to be a proper and virtuous thing that we should rather say prayers to the worship of God than invent tales. And on Saturday it is the custom for women to wash their heads. . . .

Being therefore unable on that day to fully carry out our established order of life, I think it would be well done to refrain from reciting tales on that day. And as we shall then have been here four days, if we are desirous to avoid being joined by others, I conceive it would be more opportune to quit this place and go elsewhere, and I have already thought of a place, and arranged everything."

"So when Sunday came, the queen, with slow steps and accompanied and followed by her ladies and by the three youths, and led by the song of maybe twenty nightingales and other birds, took her way towards the west by an unfrequented lane. . Gossiping, joking, and laughing with her company, she led them, to a beautiful and splendid palace."

The "unfrequented lane" may still be followed, and passing by it from Majano to San Dominico, we reach the Villa Palmieri, which then bore the name of Schifanoja, or "banish care," where Boccaccio's fancy pictured the remainder of the tales being told. "The palace was seated on an eminence in the middle of a large plain. When they had entered and seen the great hall and the chambers most elegantly fitted up, they greatly extolled it, judging its lord to be truly a magnificent person. Going afterwards below stairs and observing the spacious and pleasant court, the cellars stored with the richest wines, and delicate springs of water everywhere running, they extolled it yet more. Thence they went to rest in an open gallery which overlooked the court, set out with all the flowers of the season, whither the master of the household brought wine and sweetmeats for their refreshment.

"They were now shown into the garden, which was on one side of the palace, and walked about. All round and through the midst of it were broad, straight walks flanked with vines. . . . The sides of these walks were closed with white and red roses and jasmine in such a manner as to exclude the morning and even the midday sun. . . . In the midst, what seemed more delightful than anything else was a plot of ground like a meadow, the grass of deep green, spangled with a thousand different flowers, and set round with orange and cedar trees. . . . In the centre of this meadow was a fountain of white marble, beautifully carved . . . a jet of water spurted up which made a most agreeable sound in its fall; the water which came thence, ran through the meadow by a secret passage, and was carried to every part of the garden, uniting in one stream at its going out, and falling with such force into the plain as to turn two mills." Boccaccio is evidently painting the villa as he knew it. The two mills still exist, but were rebuilt after being destroyed in a flood of the Mugnone in 1409. The life his youths and ladies lived, walking about, discoursing, and wearing chaplets of flowers, feasting by the side of a fountain, singing and dancing, reading and playing chess, and after supper going to the meadow by the fountain-side to tell stories, was the way in which much of that society was carried on, when the need of noble forms of social intercourse was as strongly felt as it was in the early Renaissance; and we have a real and charming picture of a highly-cultured, if pagan, company, which carried the art of getting the best out of life to its highest point, and

> "Wandering in idleness, but not in folly,
> Sate down in the high grass and in the shade
> Of many a tree, sun-proof—day after day,
> When all was still and nothing to be heard
> But the cicala's voice among the olives,
> Relating in a ring, to banish care,
> Their hundred tales."

The villa belonged at that time to Cioni de' Fini; the Tolomei bought it soon after, and sold it in the fifteenth century to Matteo Palmieri, and by a descendant of his, in 1670, it was rebuilt, and called by his own name. The high road to Fiesole at that time ran across where the grand terrace now stretches, and was only cleared away when the Earl of Crawford bought the villa in 1874.

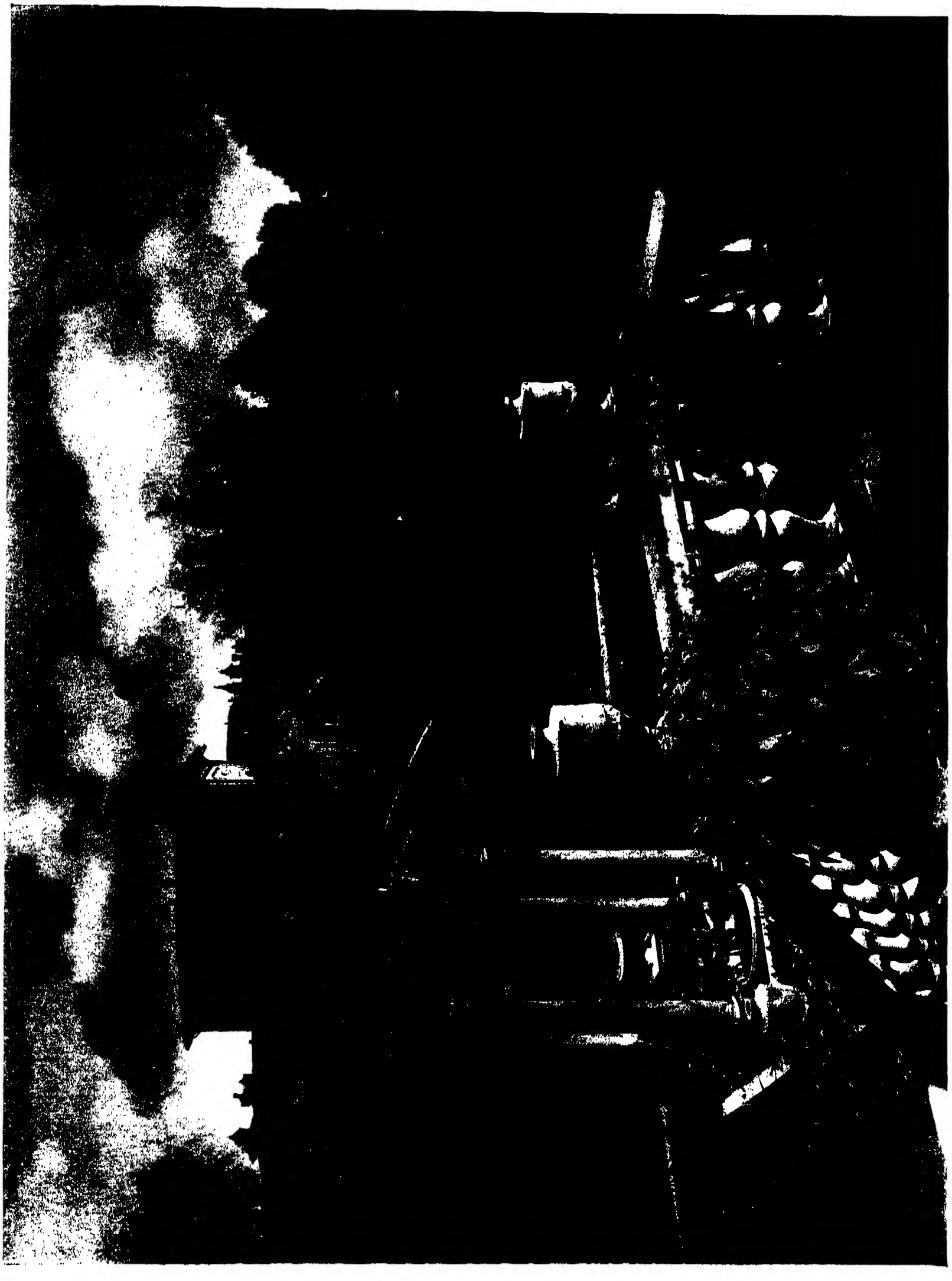
Villa Palmieri during the last two centuries was a great favourite with English people. In 1766, Lord Cowper came here, and, with his wife, who had been the beautiful Miss Gore, found it so enchanting that they made it their home; and Sir Horace Mann, in his letters, gives an account of their brilliant entertainments, and of the admiration of the Italian people, high and low, for the young and lovely Countess. From 1824, an eccentric lady, Miss Mary Farhill, lived in it for thirty years. She left it to the Grand Duchess Marie Antoinette de Bourbon, and in 1874 it passed into the hands of Lord Crawford. In 1888, and again in 1893, Lady Crawford lent her beautiful villa to Queen Victoria. Many people recall the interest that was aroused by the sight of the English Queen, driving about the country near, and expressing the greatest pleasure at her stay.

In the National Gallery is an interesting picture of the Assumption of Our Lady, attributed by Vasari to Botticelli, but now considered to be a school painting. It has "an infinite number of figures, with the zones of the heavens, the Patriarchs, the Prophets, the Apostles, the Evangelists, the Martyrs, the Confessors, the Doctors, the Virgins, and the Hierarchics." On either side, at the foot, kneel the donor, Matteo Palmieri, and his wife, Cosa Serragli. The picture was painted for the Palmieri Chapel in San Pietro Maggiore, but the owner of Villa Palmieri, who was a very learned man, an accomplished scholar, and a friend of Cosimo de Medici, had offended the Church by writing a poem, "Città della Vita," which was pronounced to contain heretical opinions on the subject of angels. The poem was not even published, but its contents being made known after its author's death, the tribunal of the Inquisition wanted to disinter the corpse and burn it together

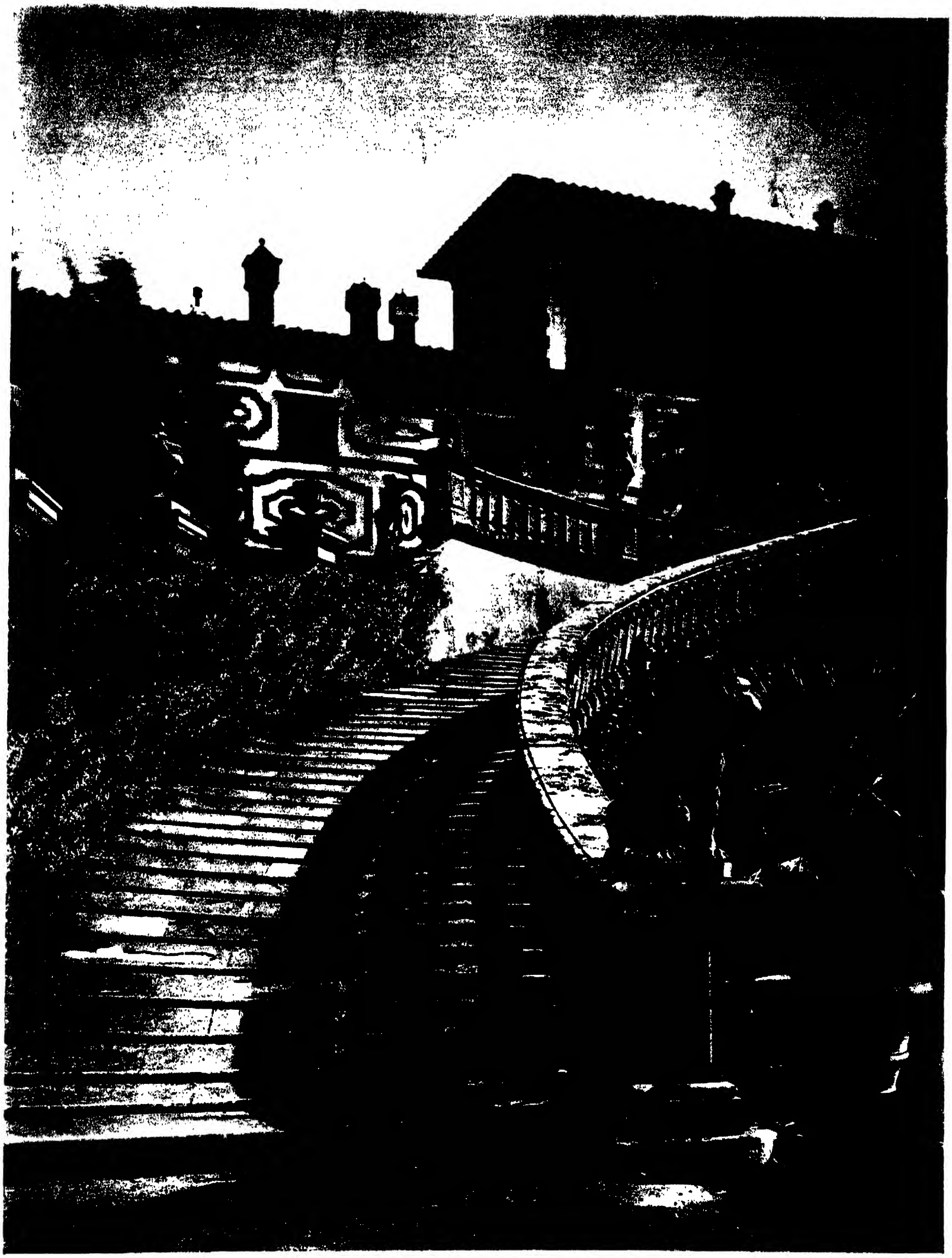
with the manuscript. Fortunately, the Republic would not give up either, and the MS. is now one of the treasures of the Laurentian Library. The picture was ordered to be removed from the chapel, and was taken to the old scholar's villa and walled up for safety. It was only discovered at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Examining it in the National Gallery, it is easy to see traces of stabs and cuts upon the donor and his wife, inflicted by the zeal of the faithful when it yet hung in the Palmieri Chapel.

Under its present owner, Lady Crawford, Villa Palmieri is as fascinating a resort as you could find for spring and summer days and nights. Its wide bricked terrace, with a balustrade and statues, looking out over the Val d'Arno, would seem the very place for the gathering together of a company of congenial spirits. The double stairway, with its fine, graceful sweep, was built by Palmieri's descendant in 1670; it is overgrown with creepers and the air is heavy with perfume. It leads to the flower garden, which has a wall in which round openings at intervals frame exquisite views, and below, the ground falls away into wild and distant walks, where irises grow in spring-time, and where such nightingales sing as might have heralded the coming of Pampinea and her goodly company.

VILLA PALMIERI.



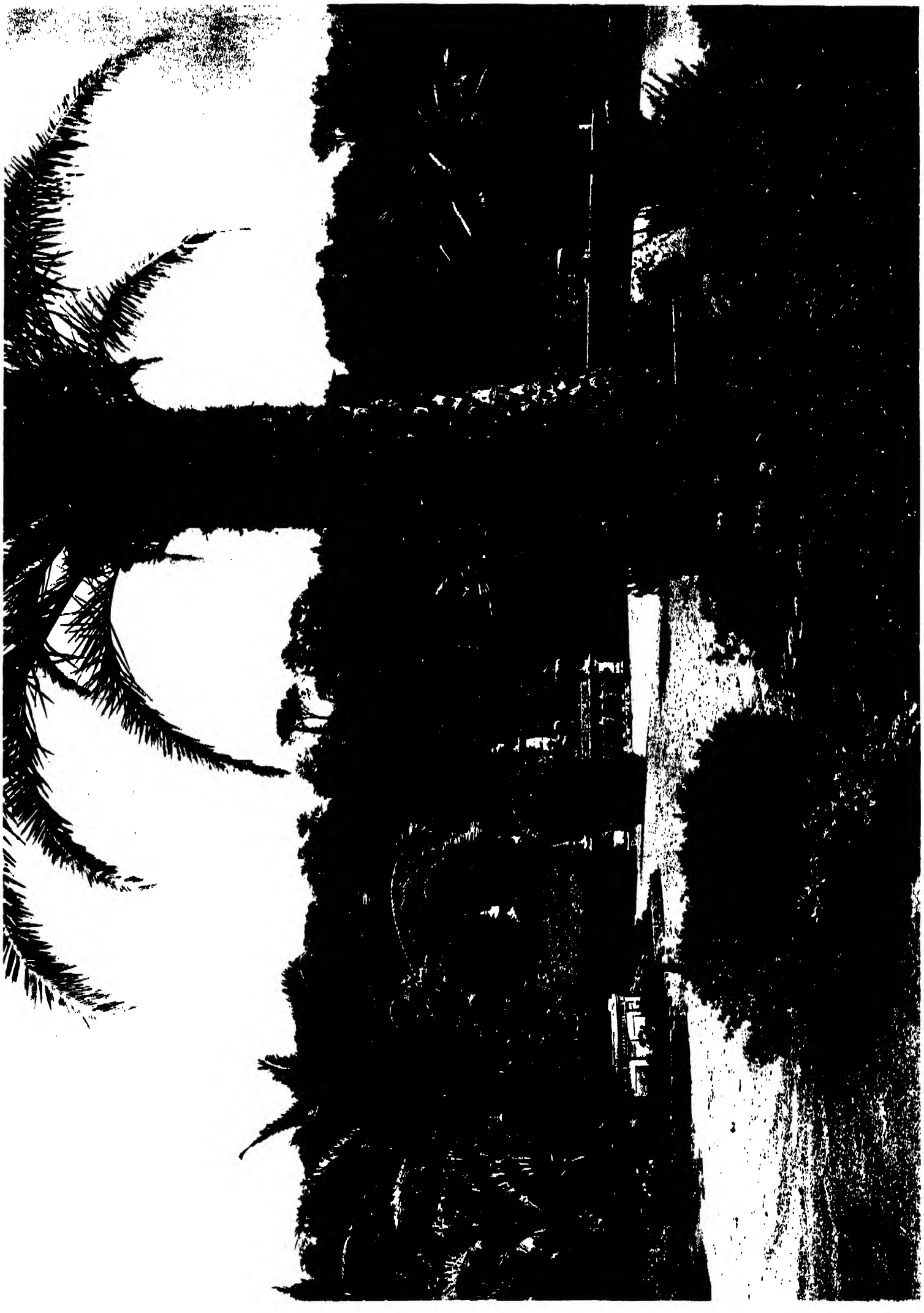
VILLA PALMIERI.



THE WESTERN STAIRWAY.

SOUTHERN TERRACES.

VILLA PALMIERI.



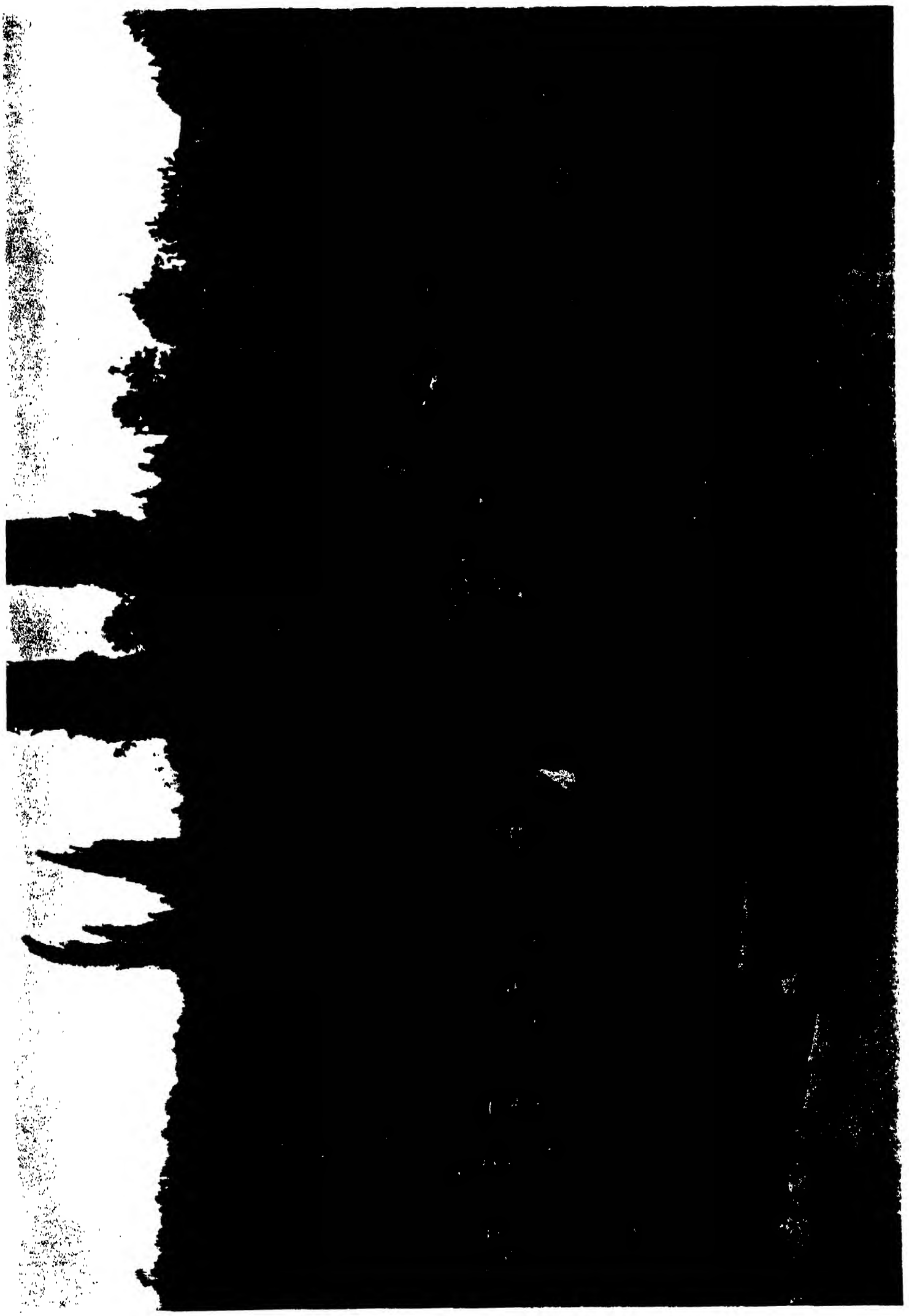
PALMS, SOUTH TERRACE.

THE CYPRESS TERRACE.

VILLA PALMIERI.

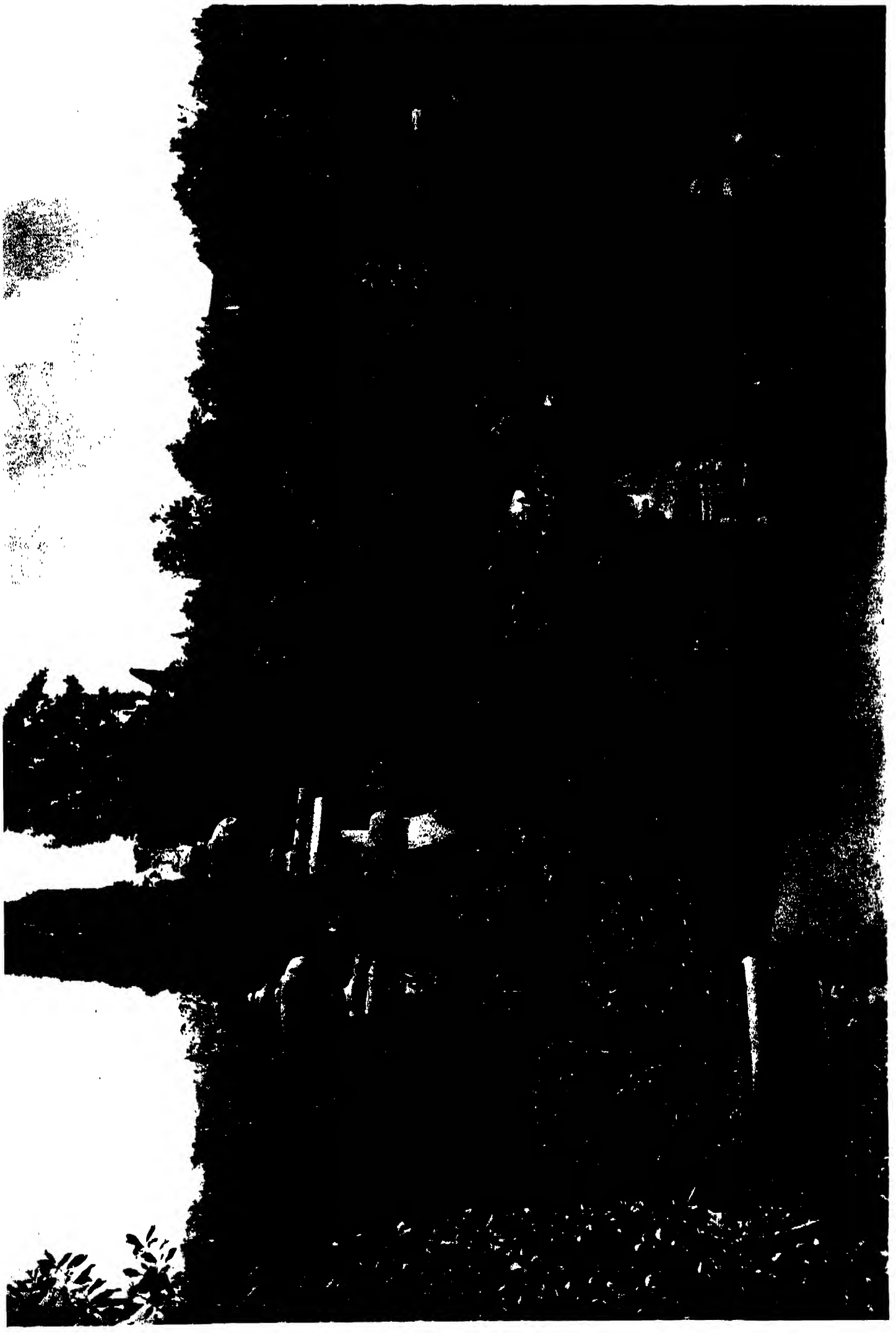
THREE SENTINELS.

VILLA PALMIERI.



THROUGH THE PERGOLA TO FISH-POND.

VILLA PALMIERI.



PART OF CIRCULAR WALL

LOOKING ON TO FLORENCE.

THE CIRCLE PATH.

FERY OF THE VILLA.

LOGGIA OF THE PLEASAUNCE.

IN THE PLEASAUNCE.

LOGGIA AND FISH-POND.

THE CACTUS WALK.

PILASTERS OF CYPRESS.

VILLA PALMIERI.

GATEWAY OF THE ORANGE GARDEN.

VILLA GARZONI,

COLLODI.

THE gardens of the great villa at Collodi, near Pescia, are a monument of baroque art. The villa overpowers the little old town, whose ramshackle houses climb the steep hill behind it, and looms from afar, a huge, grey building, decorated with flamboyant statues, and surrounded by mountains whose undulations are rich in olive woods and vineyards. The garden is laid out against the hillside, and is evidently designed to impress the visitor as he enters with a grand *coup d'œil*. It differs in this from the gardens of an earlier day, in which you are led on from one revelation to another. Standing within the tall gates and spreading ironwork barriers, the formal garden spreads and expands upwards, lavishly bedecked with plaster figures, of great size and small merit. Although the garden, which is a work of the seventeenth century, cannot compare with those of previous ages, there is a fine boldness of idea in the planning of the great stairway, with its balustrades, sweeping up from the centre and rising one tier above another, forming two or three terraces. The terraces themselves are very picturesque, with cypresses towering against the blue distance, and on a summer day the air is heavy with the scent of orange blossom and jasmine. Below the *perron* of the stairway is placed one of the fantastic shell grottoes so dear to the garden architect of the decadence. It still retains the pretty, foolish trick which must often have made good sport when it was new. You enter, a spring is touched, and a frieze of jets at the entrance keeps you a prisoner till the one who knows the secret bids it cease. We can fancy the conceit lending itself to many mock captures and feigned despairs in those frivolous, bygone summers.

For Villa Garzoni is *par excellence* a garden arranged for pleasure. Situated in so isolated a position, far from Florence, alone in the mountains, save for what were only the few peasants' houses, that clustered near it, it can only have been used for a summer resort, in those days of powder and patches, when its splendour was at its height. It is something of an attempt to imitate the gardens of Versailles, is more rococo and less Italian than any other. One of its beauties is a stately framework of clipped cypress, a double wall, with shady path between, rising in volutes and arches, and going all round the central garden. The stairway culminates in a wonderful water-work centre-piece, which once played in all directions; a mass of jets and spouts and spraying showers.

Above this great central *jeu d'artifice*, we mount again on either side of the descending stream which feeds the fountain; this is formed into a series of deep pools, and halfway up on either hand, reclines a more than life-size female figure in stucco, one personifying Lucca, the other Florence. While higher still, a giant "Fame" towers aloft in a bower of green, and from the trumpet at her lips once blew a sparkling shower into the maidenhair-fringed basin at her feet.

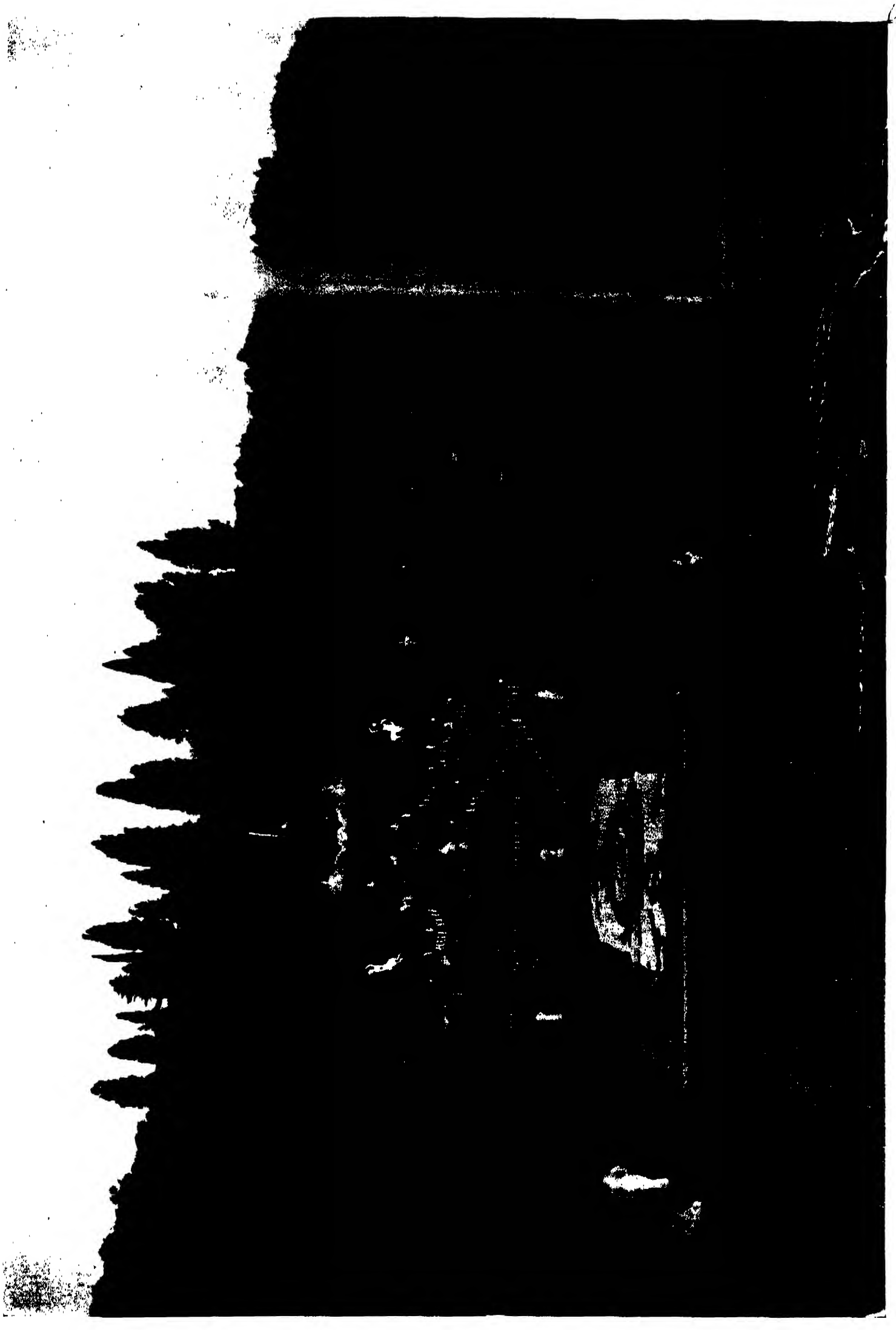
Behind her the wood begins. Plane trees and acacias make a green shade, and in the cool recesses above, we come to the most attractive little bath-house imaginable. It contains two bathrooms with tempting marble baths, and dressing-rooms, and two little *salons* "for repose." The whole is decorated in white, blue, and gold, with gilt scrolls and frescoes of little *amorini* and garlands. The pretty sofas and *tabourets* are still covered with pale, faded silks. It gives a curious impression of the daintiness and luxury of Italian society in the days of the Grand Dukes of Tuscany, when the Marchese Garzoni, for whom the villa was built, held his mimic summer court in the mountains. The designer and architect of the villa and its garden is doubtful. It belongs to the middle of the seventeenth century, for Francesco Sbarra, a poet of Lucca, wrote an ode in 1652 entitled "The Pomps of Collodi," in which he lauds the enchanting parterres and the lordly palace, constructed for the Marchese Romano Garzoni, and says:

> "Here where we lately saw ruins and caves,
> And horrid chaos, we admire to-day
> Delights and vastness and wonders."

He describes the rustic bridge, the labyrinth, the mimic theatre, and gives a long account of the fountains and the statues, "whose beauties are hidden beneath a silver veil of spray." He speaks, too, of the castle, or palace, with its ample *cortile*, raised by him "who is the sovereign lord of all this region."

Collodi was the property of the See of Lucca in the Middle Ages. Its long siege by the Florentines in the winter of 1430 is famous, and minutely described by Rinaldo degli Albizzi, who records how well the valorous little city continued to hold its own. In 1437 it was conquered by the Florentines, but by a treaty of 1442 was restored to Lucca. The little township has had its tale of citizens, distinguished in Italy—writers, doctors, and philosophers. The villa has always belonged to the Garzoni, but they are now represented by two daughters, the last of the line.

VILLA GARZONI.

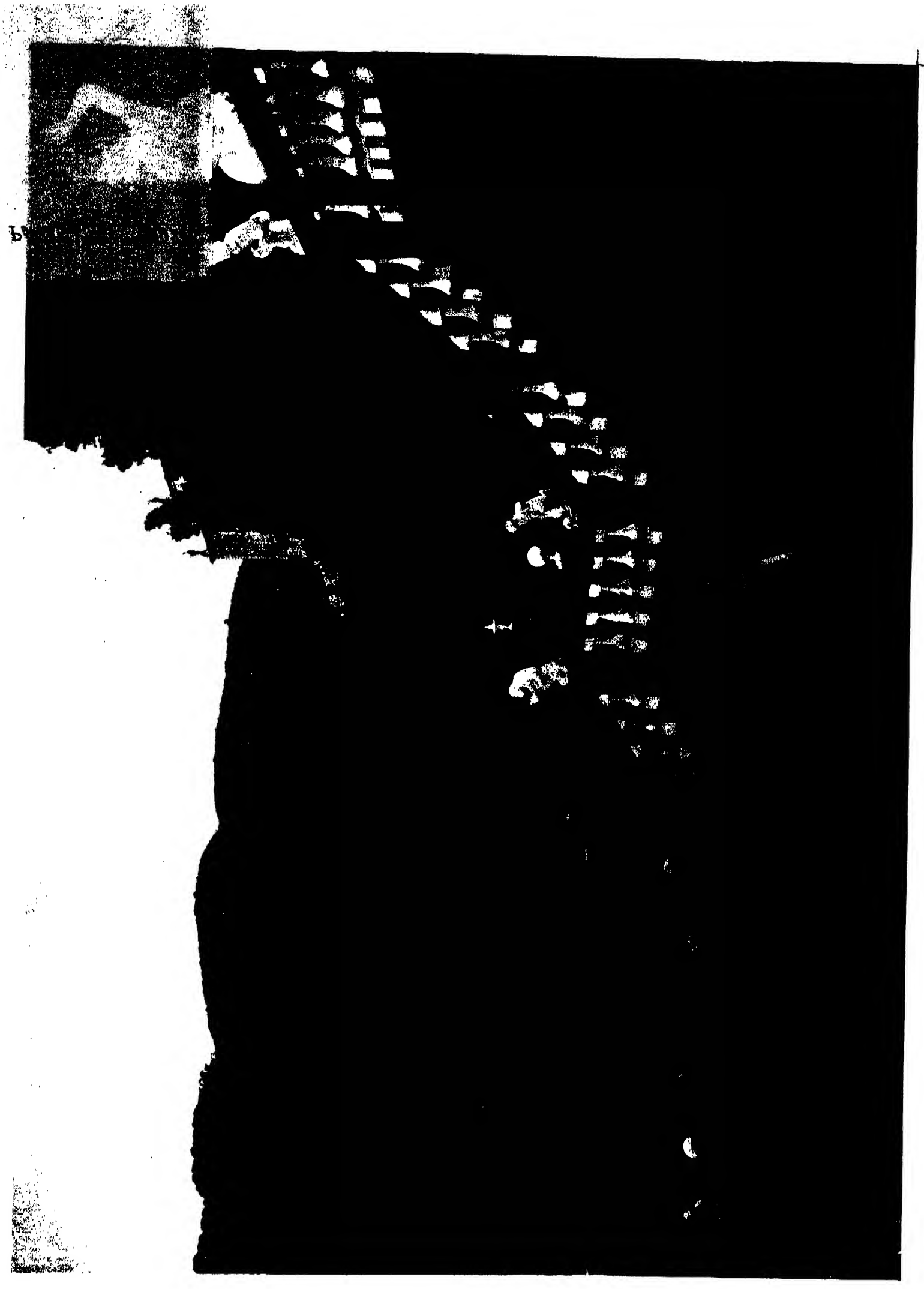


FROM ENTRANCE GATE.

VILLA GARZONI.

FROM THE CASCADE.

VILLA GARZONI,



WEST OF THE SEMI-CIRCULAR ASCENT.

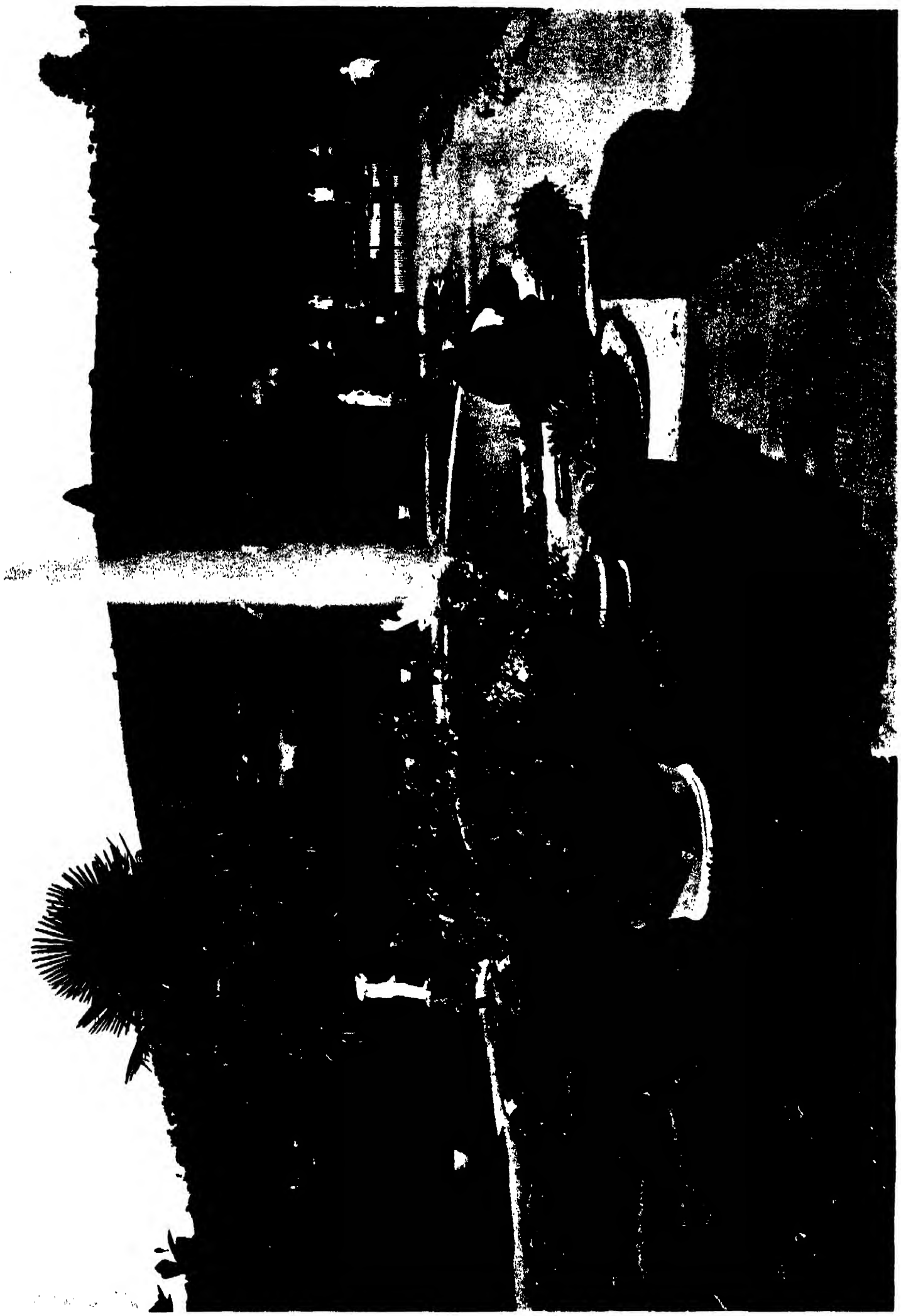
VILLA GARZONI.

THE FOURTH TERRACE.

UPPER CASCADE.

CYPRESS AND BOX.

VILLA GARZONI.

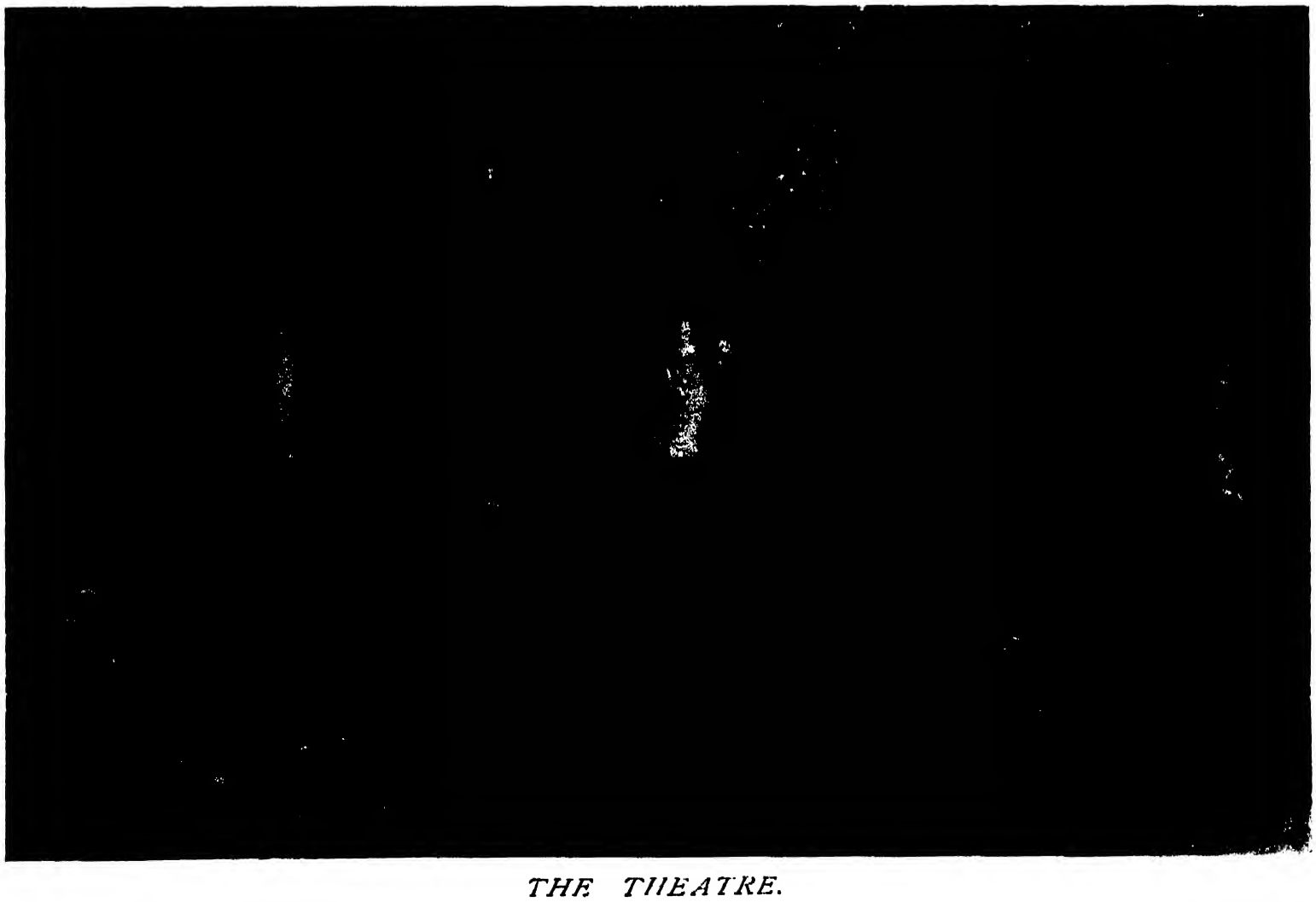


BOX HEDGING

VILLA GARZONI.

EAST ASCENT.

THE GARDENER'S HOUSE.



THE THEATRE.

THE BOBOLI GARDENS,

FLORENCE.

THE public gardens of any great town are hardly ever interesting; they have an official look; miles of well-raked gravel paths are enough to damp the most lively imagination. Yet the Boboli was always a Court garden, and all the red tape cannot blot out a stately and interesting past.

The garden is laid out on a steep hill at the back of that palace that Luca Pitti sold to Eleanora de Medici, the widow of Cosimo I., in 1549. Eleanora was an excellent, good woman, but she was never popular with the Florentines, who described her as of an *insopportabile gravità*. Tribolo laid out the garden for her, together with Buontalenti, and Bartolomeo Ammanti helped to ornament and erect many of the buildings. Near the entrance is a grotto, painted with birds and flowers, and adorned with coloured stucco figures, once gay enough, but now rather forlorn and tawdry. Set into its trumpery work, incongruous and particularly out of keeping, are four half-finished statues by Michael Angelo, intended for the monument of Julius II., the work for which is described as a tragedy by Condivi, the biographer of the great Florentine. The statues were intended for captives, and imprisoned for ever, as they are, in the marble, half-struggling to light, they have a double significance. In the inner chamber is a Venus by Gian Bologna, the principal figure of a fountain. The main road mounts up the hill to the back of the palace, which, detached and spacious as is its façade, is at the back, sunk in a deep trench-like cutting, which has necessitated the architect's inventing all sorts of expedients for filling up and bridging over. A sort of raised gallery, with a very fine and elaborate fountain, fills the main vacuum, towards which the first floor of the palace looks straight out across a paved court. The great open slope immediately at the back of the palace is given up to a really magnificent amphitheatre, one of those *mises-en-scènes* which bring home to us what regal ideas of entertainment they had in the Renaissance. It is really large, yet amusing as a faint copy of the great classic models from which the idea was taken. It has six tiers of seats in a huge semi-circle of stone, which is separated from the arena by a stone balustrade with fluted pillars, tasteful, even severe, and, like the little niches which ornament the amphitheatre at intervals, and which are filled alternately by a vase and a statue, far removed from the florid and flippant style of the baroque, which was just coming into vogue.

The view from the right-hand corner of the amphitheatre is famous; but let Shelley speak of it, for it is not altered at all since he saw it: "You see below, Florence, a smokeless city, its domes and spires occupying the vale; and beyond, to the right, the Apennines, whose base extends even to the walls. The green valleys of these mountains, which gently unfold themselves upon the plain, and the intervening hills covered with vineyards and olive orchards, are occupied by the villas, which are, as it were, another city, a Babylon of palaces and gardens. In the midst of the picture rolls the Arno, through woods and bounded by the aërial snow and summits of the Lucchese Apennines. On the left, a magnificent buttress of lofty, craggy hills juts out in many shapes over a lovely vale, and approaches the walls of the city. Cascine and ville occupy the pinnacles and abutments of those hills, over which is seen at intervals the ethereal mountain line, heavy with snow The vale below is covered with cypress groups, whose obeliskine forms of intense green pierce the grey shadow of the hill that overhangs them. The cypresses, too, of this garden form a magnificent foreground of accumulated verdure; pyramids of dark leaves and shining cones rising out of the mass, beneath which are cut, like caverns, recesses which conduct into walks. The cathedral, with its marble campanile, and the domes and spires of Florence, are at our feet."

From hardly any other place does one get such a view of the marble bell-tower and Brunelleschi's wonderful brown dome. They seem to stand out above all the surrounding houses, relieved against the sky, and flanked by the graceful tower of the Palazzo Vecchio, "noblest symbol of civic liberty in the world," which sends the deep note of its bell across the summer air. Behind the amphitheatre the ground climbs straight up to a plateau, laid out in a sheet of water in a

stone setting, in the midst of which a green bronze Neptune moulded by Gian Bologna poises his trident above four crouching mermen. Against the ilexes behind stands a statue of Abundance, a woman with a fair, expressionless face, believed to be a portrait of Joanna of Austria, wife of Francesco I. The statue was executed by Gian Bologna and Tocca and erected in 1636, to commemorate the fact that during the general distress in Italy from wars, Tuscany alone, under the "benevolent prince," Ferdinand II., revelled in plenty. This part of the garden, like so many old Italian pleasure grounds, is a good deal spoilt by the planting of deciduous trees, dotted about in a manner quite alien to the conception of the whole. There ought to be a law prohibiting the planting of copper beeches, pampas grass, and other ornamental foliage which looks so out of keeping with the close-cut, sober green of bay and ilex and the beauty of time-worn stone and marble. On the plateau at the top the flower garden, or *giardino segreto*, is laid out. In Italian gardens this is generally near the palace, unless, as in the present instance, it has a good-sized casino attached, in which the guests could spend the day, lie down and rest during the hot hours, and dine if they pleased. The casino, with its gently curving cream walls, is now given up as a storehouse for lemon trees, and the garden itself is not very gay. It is formally laid out, in the usual way, with a fountain in the middle, round the base of which climb three green bronze monkeys. Its interest lies chiefly in its position. It is situated on the remains of one of those bastions which Michael Angelo constructed in 1529 when he was engineer of the Republic, and which he helped to defend during an eleven months' siege. The great brown walls, with one remaining tower, look almost impregnable, and are in curious contrast to the frivolous little garden planted on them when a hundred years had passed. Here we look over the ridge in the opposite direction to all the rest of the grounds, and very lovely the view is, the Apennines from this point taking an exquisite intense blue, like lapis-lazuli, and groups of dark cypresses standing out against the silver foam of the olive gardens.

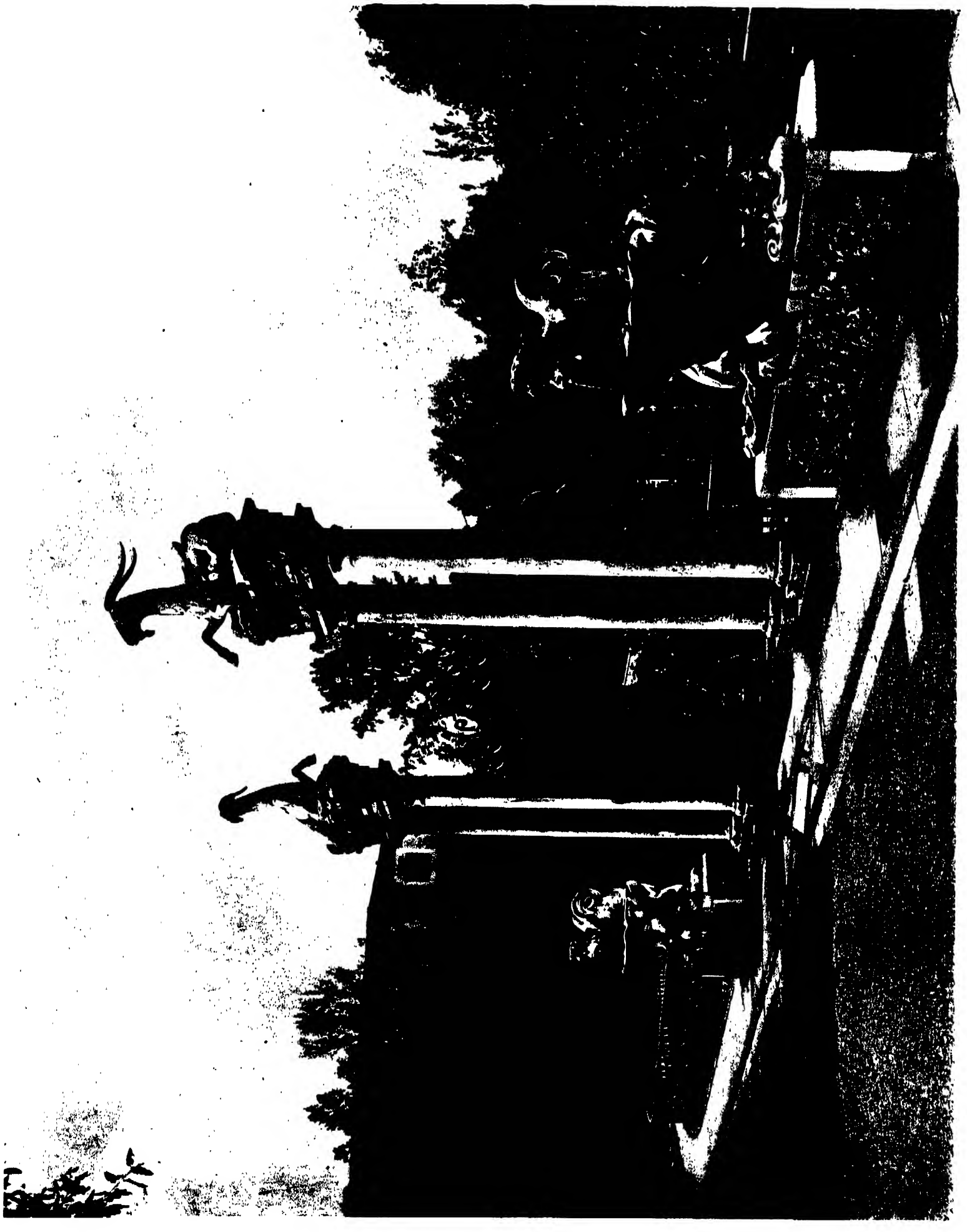
At the entrance to the garden is a belvedere, from which we overlook the town. There are few open spaces in these gardens; the whole consists of a sort of *bocage* of ilexes, overarching in dense shade, with their rich black trunks and branches looking almost uncanny in the gloom, or clipped into long green walls in which niches are cut for seats and marble statues.

A very imposing avenue of tall cypresses leads away from the flower-garden to the south-west down a steep hill; outside it, on either hand, runs a pleached alley of ilexes; and halfway down, where it is broken by groups of statuary, a very wide alley branches off to right and left, each ending at a fountain. The effect of this avenue, with its dark sentinels against the blue sky, and the glimmering forms of god and goddess, is very grand, and must have been much more harmonious before the broad pathway was vulgarised by gravel. Formerly, of course, it had only a dark, moss-grown road, set across, every yard or so, by a low, transverse bar of grooved grey stone, like one or two which still remain.

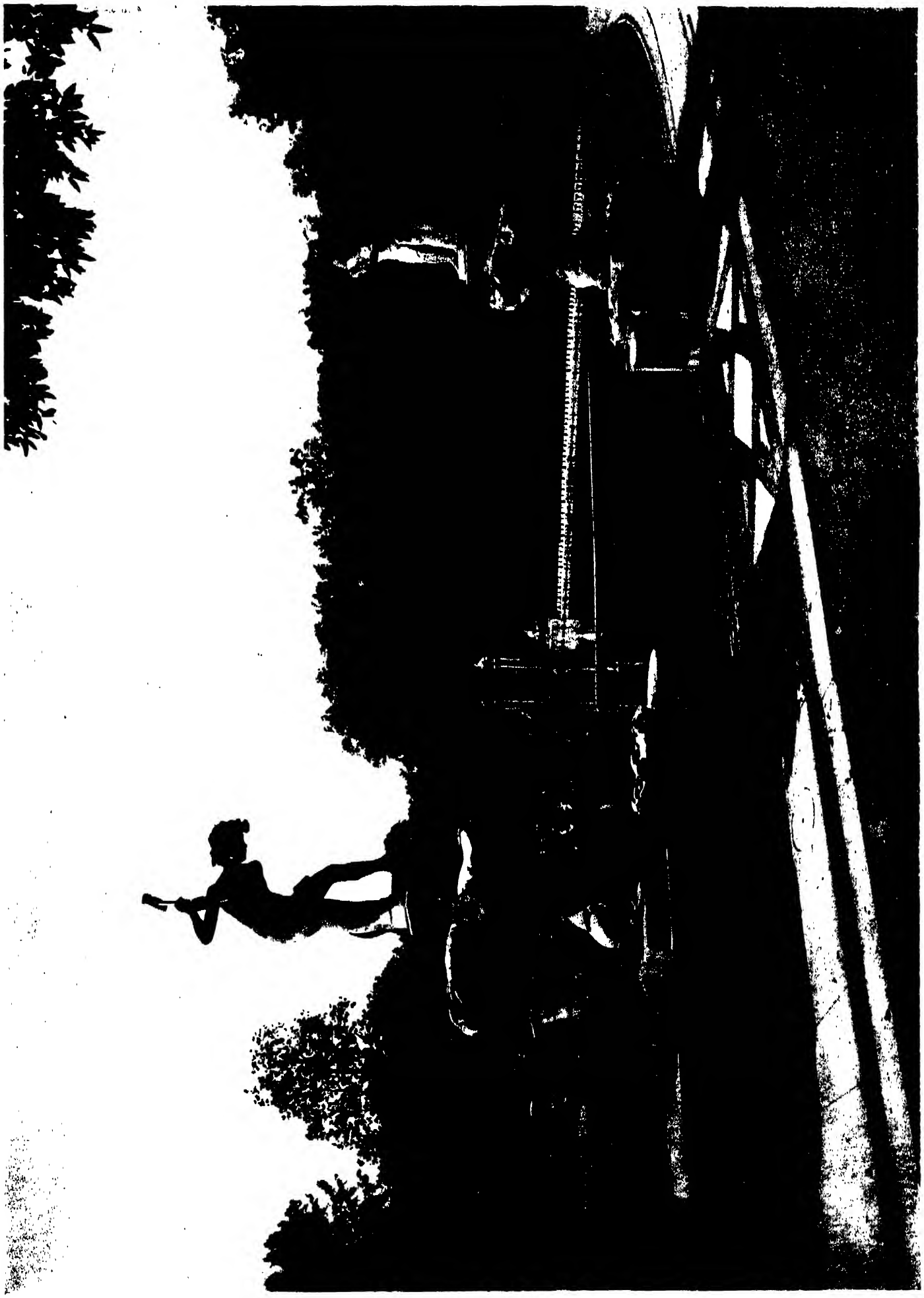
The path sweeps down, and we come to another enclosure, a break as striking as, and quite different from, any we have yet seen, illustrating the clever way in which the garden artists of the Renaissance understood how to space out their ground and how to lead up to surprises. The avenue is so stately that it was felt to be necessary that it should have some adequate goal. This is afforded by a *giardino del lago*, a miniature lake set in close-cut walls like all the rest, and having a fantastically shaped island, an *isolotto*, which is reached by bridges and boats. It is all balustraded about and set with pots of lemon trees, and over the whole towers one of Gian Bologna's fountains high in the air, with shallow basin, upon which stands a figure of Oceanus. A stone pathway with seats at intervals encircles the toy lake. It is a fitting setting for the society of a Court, a place to assemble on a summer evening; these close-paved paths seem made for the tap-tap of high-heeled satin slippers, and little voyages could be made round the tiny lake without danger of splashing delicate brocades or ruffling powdered curls. Publicity has well-nigh obliterated the charm of the Court garden, but a little of it may still be recalled. The little meadow beyond was once called l'Uccellaja, and snares were set here for catching small birds. It is now used by the King and his officers as a jumping-ground for horses, and is laid out in all the intricacies of in and out, fences with a drop, a double, a bullfinch, which no doubt the Italian officers, who are splendid riders, negotiate very easily in spite of their formidable appearance.

Ghosts are not common in Italy, but this old pleasure-ground is credited with one. Boboli was the name of the owner who cultivated the land and sold it to the Medici. After he had parted with it he pined for it, and so great was his love and longing that he could not eat or sleep or banish it from his mind. He was always talking of it, and his refrain was, "You will see, after death I will come to it again." Soon after his death it began to be said that the figure of an old man was often seen on moonlight nights, working in the garden. We are assured that to this day it is often beheld, and that the tap of his spade can be heard.

GIAN BOLOGNA'S FOUNTAIN ON THE ISOLOTTO.



EAST GATE OF THE ISOLOTTO.

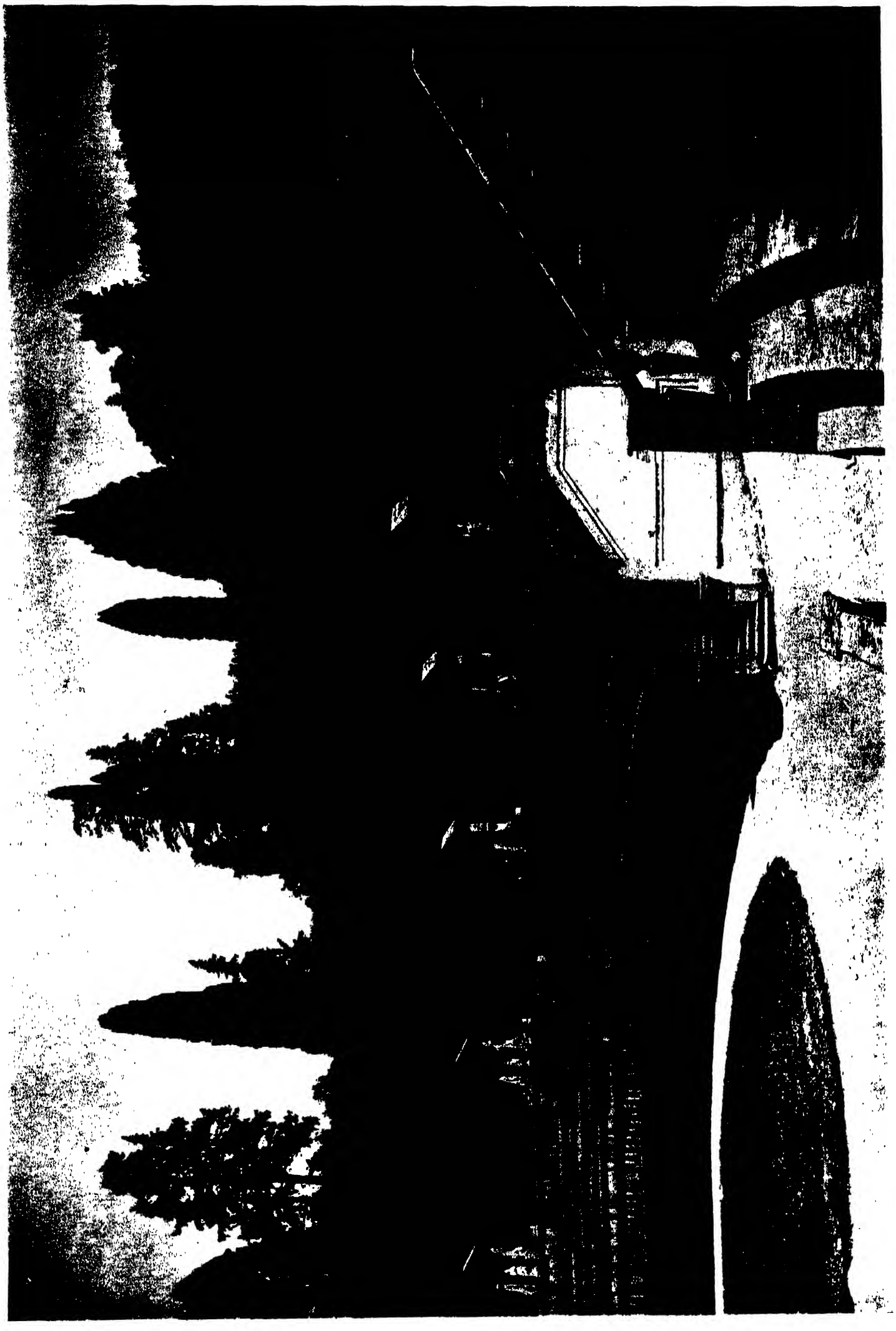


PART OF THE CIRCULAR LAKE.

THE WEST GATE AND AVENUE.

BALUSTRADE OF THE ISOLOTTO.

NORTH-EAST END OF THE AMPHITHEATRE.



SEATS OF THE AMPHITHEATRE.

LAKE OF NEPTUNE, UPPER GARDENS.

THE BOBOLI GARDENS.

GREAT AVENUE UPWA

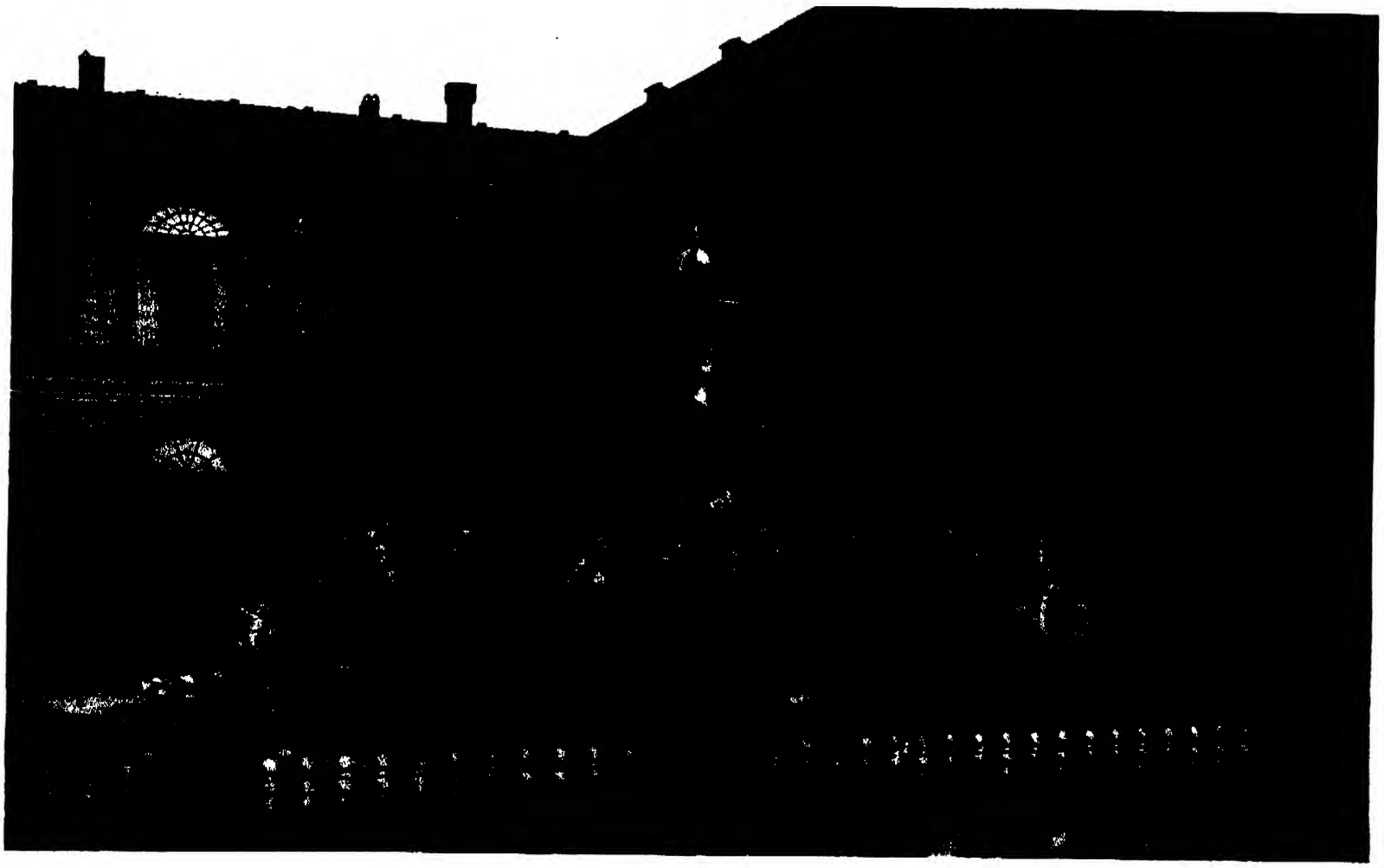
LOOKING DOWN THE GREAT AVENUE.

THE BOBOLI GARDENS.

OAK AND ILEX AVENUES.

THE LEMONIA.

THE BOBOLI GARDENS.



FOUNTAIN OF THE WESTERN COURT.

VILLA BONDI, FLORENCE.

THE Villa of Garofano in Camerata, to call it by its mediæval name, stands on the old road to Fiesole. Not the grand, new, winding *viale*, up which tourists flock and tramlines grind; a small, modest road between dun-coloured walls leads up to the gateway, with its simple columns and good old ironwork, but at the back of the villa is a still narrower road, hardly more than a track, and this is probably the way by which the Court painter, Cimabue, rode, to find and bring back a shepherd boy from the hills beyond Fiesole; and, more memorable still, it must often have known the feet of Dante, for this was the home of his later life in Florence, and belonged to him at the time of his banishment. The first notice we have of the villa is in an instruction of May 16th, 1332, by Ser Saldi Dini (an ancestor, we may take it, of that Agostino Dini who long after built Villa Collazzi). He portions out land between Piero and Jacopo, sons of the dead poet, and their uncle, Francesco Alighieri, and specifies the confines "which run along the public road."

The sons made over the villa to their uncle, to reimburse him for the loan of 205 golden florins lent to their unhappy father in two loans, March 14th and June 2nd, 1300. Francesco Alighieri sold his newly-acquired possession at once, and the purchasers were Giovanni and Accerito Portinari, nephews of that Bice who was the inspiration of the divine poet. When, by a decree of the Duca de Atene, the act of confiscation against Dante was annulled and all other possessions restored to his heirs, the legal sale of this villa was allowed to stand.

In 1427 we find that Bernardo di Giovanni Portinari, nephew of Giovanni, the buyer, possessed, among his other estates, a farm called Garofano, with "a good gentleman's house" on it, situated in Camerata, in the abbey of Fiesole, and in the parish of San Bartolommeo. The boundaries have become somewhat changed, owing to deviations in the course of the torrential river, Mugrone, and we find it sometimes described as in the parish of San Marco, or even in that of San Gervasio; but this was the only piece of land owned by the Portinari in Camerata. Names of villas always change at the caprice of their owners, and later we find it denominated Como. Portinari sold the villa to his cousin, Giovanni di Guatteri, and his wife, Francesca Strozzi, and they sold it back to the Portinari in 1454. It remained in this family till 1507, and then passed through several other hands. Duke Salviati bought it in 1738, and then again it had various owners for short periods; but every transfer is recorded, and we have the utmost certainty that this was really Dante's house. The shield of the Portinari is carved on a wall not later than the second half of the fourteenth century. At the time Salviati bought it it is entered in the city annals as "a villa in Camerata," which must have been that of Dante, bought by the Portinari family.

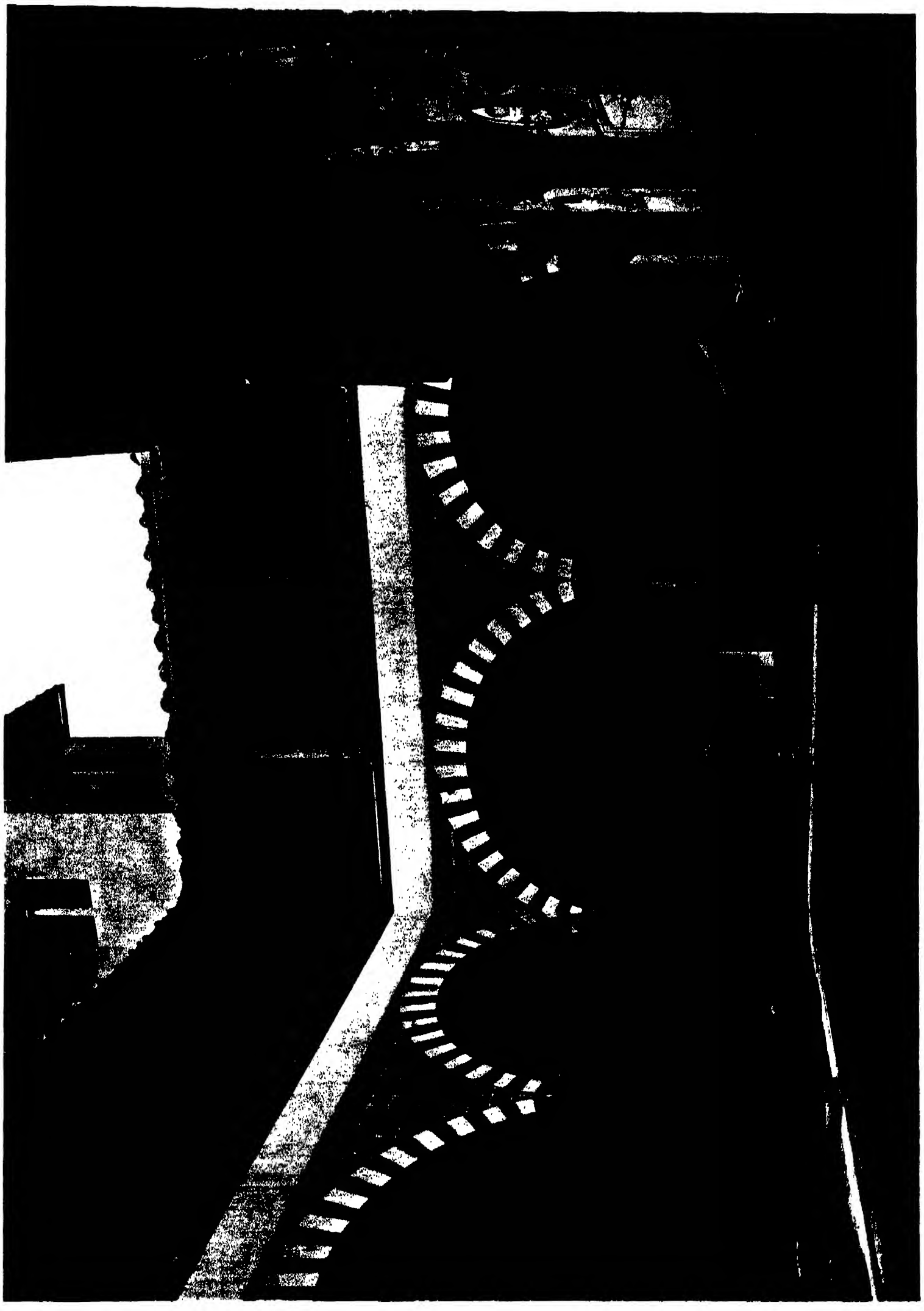
It is worth while tracing its history minutely, because so much of the old house still retains its original aspect. In the centre is a small open *cortile*, with slender columns, which support an upper corridor running all round, with broad eaves and open to the air; from this open the bedrooms, one of which goes by the name of "Dante's room," and may, indeed, well have been that of the master of the house. Its windows lead out on to a loggia, from which there is a view over Florence, and it is hardly going too far to assume that when the exile's thoughts turned back to his beloved city he must often have pictured it as it looked from the loggia of this, his own sweet home. It is one of the most perfect views, looking off to Vallombrosa on the one hand, and towards the mountain on which stands the village of Incontro, where tradition says that St. Francis and St. Dominic met, and on the other to where the sharp shafts of the Carrara mountains stand out against the horizon.

The villa now belongs to Signor Bondi, whose beautiful copies of antique marbles and terra-cottas in Signa earth are so well known to travellers in Italy. Italians are beginning to develop a love for horticulture, and Signor Bondi has a gardener who takes prizes at many of the great shows at Turin and elsewhere. The enclosure round the pavilion is a blaze of colour, and there are some splendid aloes, plants of over thirty years, and which may live for another twenty years. Some people are inclined to take exception to masses of flowers in old Italian gardens as being an innovation; but nowadays we must have flowers; and as one drives away from Villa Bondi with one's hands full of carnations and scented verbena, it is an innovation which may be regarded leniently.

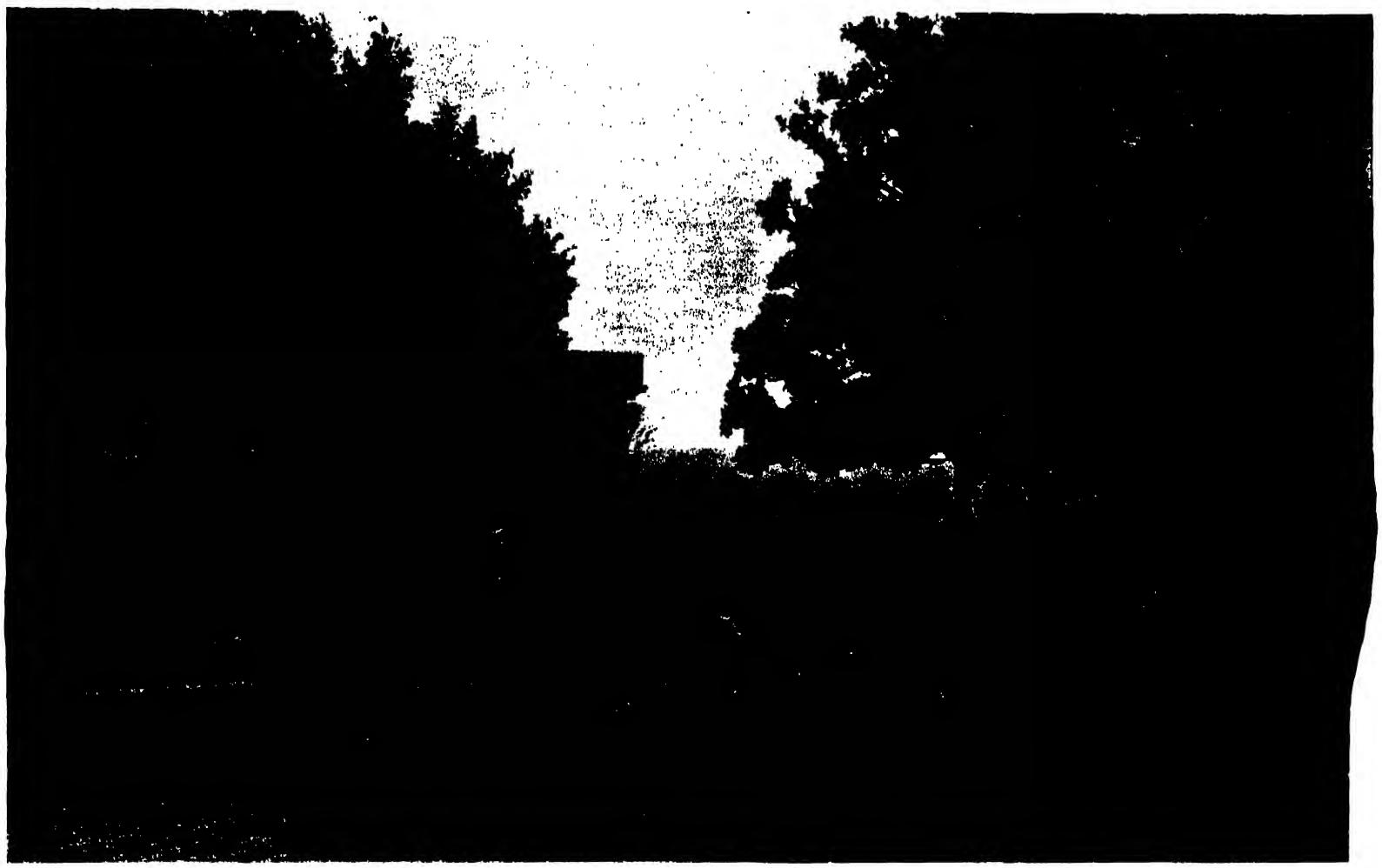
VILLA BONDI.

ENTRANCE, VILLA BONDI.

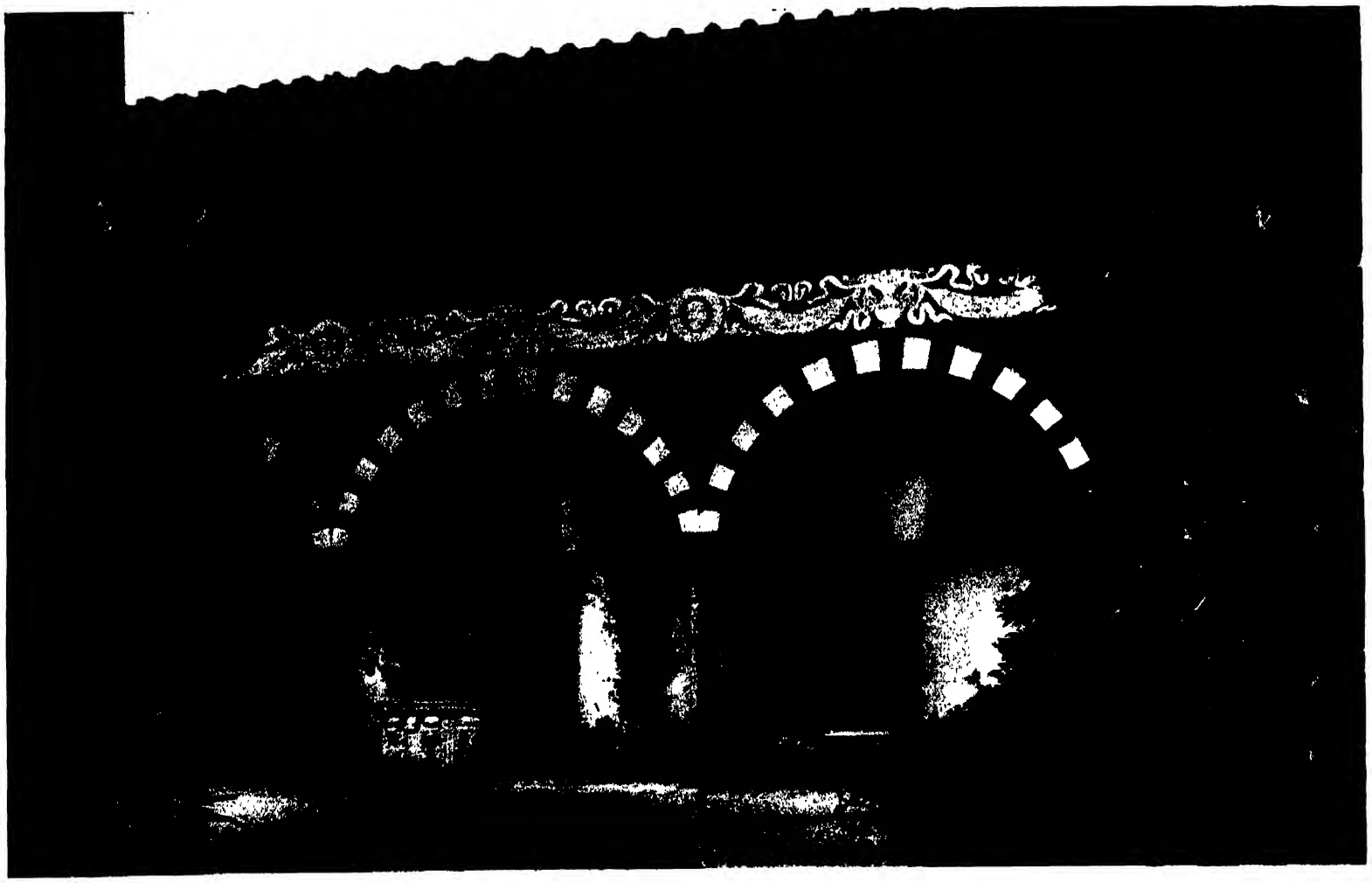
VILLA BONDI.



ENCLOSED COUR.



THE OBSERVATORY.



PART OF GARDEN FRONT.

VILLA SALVIATI,

FLORENCE.

IT is not known who built this massive and fortress-like villa, with its towers and machicolations and its sloping bastion-like walls. In 1100 it is mentioned in Florentine archives as belonging to the Montegonzi, who in 1450 sold it to Messer Alemanno Salviati. It was then described as "a strong castle with towers and battlements," and Vasari tells us that in 1529 it was besieged by the Florentine mob and burnt. That presumably ended its life as a fortress, and the massive tower, of which the main portion consists, has been transformed by a wide roof above its battlements; a courtyard with Renaissance arches has risen inside the adjoining part, but there still remain the two tall corner towers, from which men-at-arms must have watched in the old days of mediæval Florence, when a dwelling-house at a distance from the town had also to be a place of refuge.

Jacopo Salviati had already laid out the terraced garden in 1510, and in the eighteenth century an owner, smitten with the taste for rococo gardening brought in by Francesco di Medici, built the long graceful orange-houses, frivolous, stucco-decorated erections, with a balustraded façade and a clock tower. The combination makes a fascinating document, and we realise how much more interesting the buildings of the past are, because successive owners cared nothing about their additions being "in keeping."

The villa is now approached by a winding road of little interest, smothered in trees, but from Zocchi's prints we perceive that the old approach led straight up in front, by a broad, walled road. All this is now in process of being turned into a garden, with roses, bamboos, pampas grasses, lawns, and other adjuncts of modern gardening.

The most curious feature of the old garden is a spacious grotto-house, some 60ft. square, dug out underground and supported by long rows of columns, the whole covered in the grotesque fashion of the eighteenth century with stalactites, shellwork, and ornamented with statuary and monstrous animals. It is perfectly cool on the hottest day and has the remains of old *jeux d'eaux;* unfortunately, like all cool, damp, out-door places in Italy it is a haunt beloved of mosquitoes.

For 350 years the villa belonged to the great Florentine family whose name it bears. We first hear of the Salviati in Florence towards the end of the thirteenth century. A doctor, Messer Salvi, had two sons, Cambio and Lotto, who became priors of the city, and altogether the Salviati gave it sixty-three priors and twenty-three Gonfalonnieri. One worthless member there was; Giuliano, who led the mob against the Medici in 1527, and afterwards became the boon companion of the dissolute Duke Alessandro. It was he who insulted Luisa Strozzi at a masked ball and paid for it by being maimed for life by her brother, while his wife was always supposed to have poisoned the beautiful and virtuous woman who had resented his infamous behaviour. Jacopo Salviati was his cousin, and married Lucrezia, daughter of Lorenzo the Magnificent and sister to Leo X. Jacopo was the one man who at the death of Leo X. dared to stand forth as the advocate of the liberty of the people, and thereby forfeited the favour of Clement VII. His daughter Maria married Giovanni delle Bande Nere, the famous captain of *Condottieri*, and was the mother of Cosimo I. The family increased in wealth and power, and in 1628 the Jacopo of that day married Veronica, daughter of the Prince of Massa, and was created Duke of Giuliano. A letter exists giving an account of the festivities and of the wedding presents, including a picture by Raffaele d'Urbino. The letter gives a glowing description of Donna Veronica, but a contemporary declares that "Donna Veronica was endowed with but small beauty, but had a most violent and imperious temper and a jealous disposition. Her husband, poor man, had small joy of her." The Duke was handsome, gallant, and accomplished, and, as an anonymous account in the Marencelliana library in Florence has it, "was driven to seek for comfort elsewhere." Mrs. Ross, in her learned book on Florentine villas, to which I am indebted for many particulars, has translated this manuscript, which had never before been published, and which tells the tragedy most graphically.

There was an old gentleman in Florence, Giustino Canacci (to give it shortly), who, being

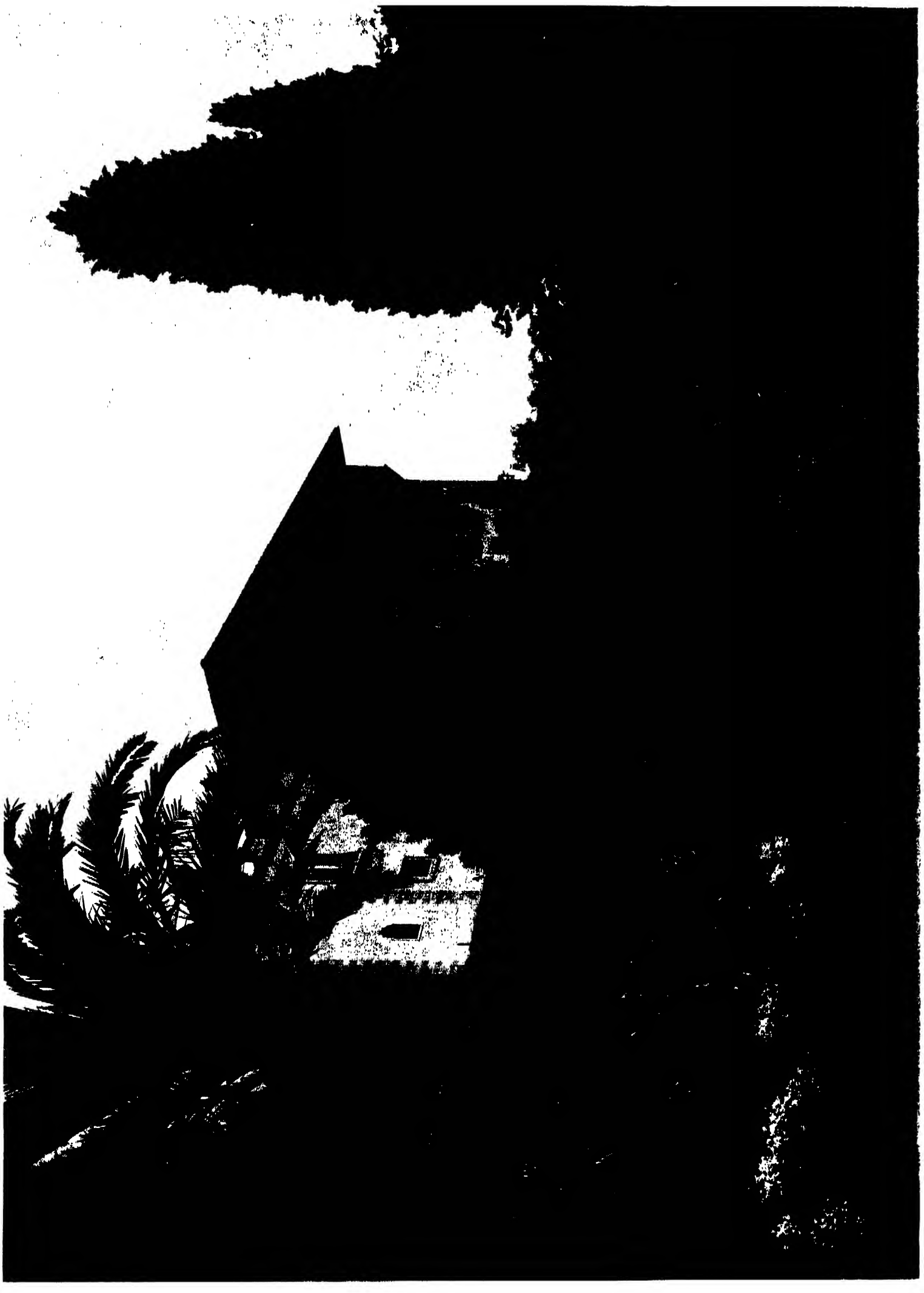
near seventy and having several grown-up children, took as his second wife, Caterina, the young daughter of a dyer, who was popularly called "the fair Cherubim," from her silken gold hair and her exquisite colouring. Her husband being "the ugliest, most tiresome, and the dirtiest man in Florence," it was scarcely to be wondered at that Caterina had first one lover and then another. She finally made the acquaintance of the Duke, who fell violently in love with her and used to visit her frequently. He could not prevent his infidelity reaching the ears of the Duchess, who was bitterly jealous. She tried to poison Caterina, but failing, she laid a plot to get rid of her.

She contrived to get hold of Caterina's two step-sons, Bartolommeo and Francesco, and by bribes, promising to hold them harmless and to make them an allowance, she prevailed on the elder to introduce the instruments of her vengeance into their father's house. She hired four assassins from Massa, who on December 31st, 1638, effected an entrance and brutally murdered the unfortunate Caterina and her maid. They cut the bodies to pieces and threw them down a well and into the Arno, all except the head of poor Caterina, which the Duchess had desired to have sent to her.

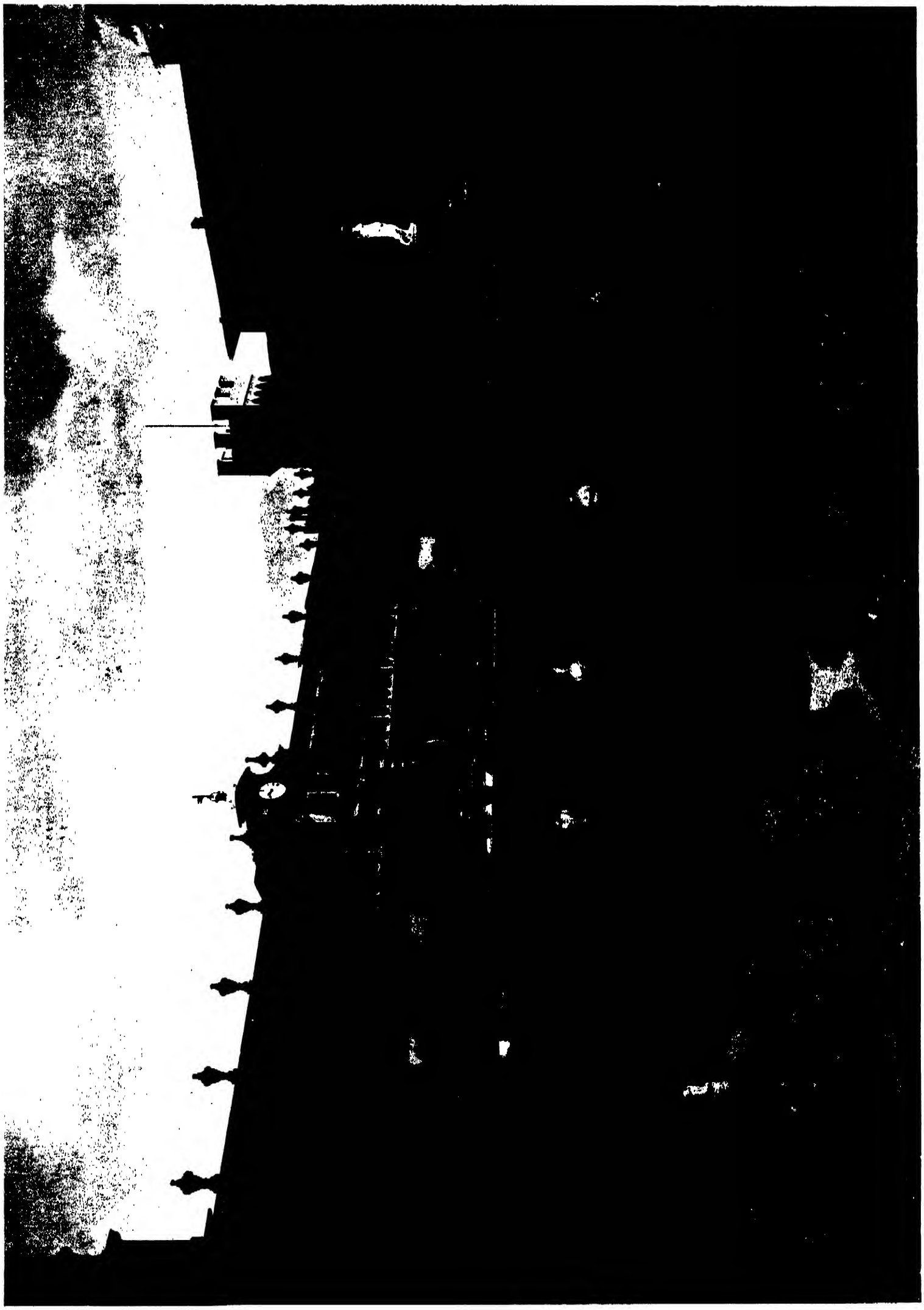
"Now the Duchess," continues the narrative, "was used to send to the Duke's room on Sundays and other holidays a silver basin covered with a fair cloth, containing collars, cuffs, and such-like things, which the Duke was wont to change on those days. But on this, the 1st of January . . . the present sent was of a different nature. Taking the head of poor Caterina, which, though bloodless and cold, yet preserved the beauty which had been the cause of her death, the Duchess placed it in the basin, covered with the usual cloth, and sent it by her waiting woman into the Duke's room. When he rose and lifted the cloth to take the clean linen, let his horror be pictured when he saw such a pitiful sight. . . . Knowing full well that his wife had done this deed, he would have no more of her, and for many a long year refused to be where she was." It was at Villa Salviati that this dreadful offering was made, and there is still a legend that in the dusk of the last night of the year, a fair head rolls silently along the haunted floor of the Duke's chamber.

The last Salviati who owned the villa was a Cardinal. He left it to his niece, Princess Borghese. Later it was sold to an Englishman and then to Mario, the famous tenor, who as Duke of Candia lived there with Grisi, and who there entertained Garibaldi when he visited Florence. It now belongs to Signor Turri.

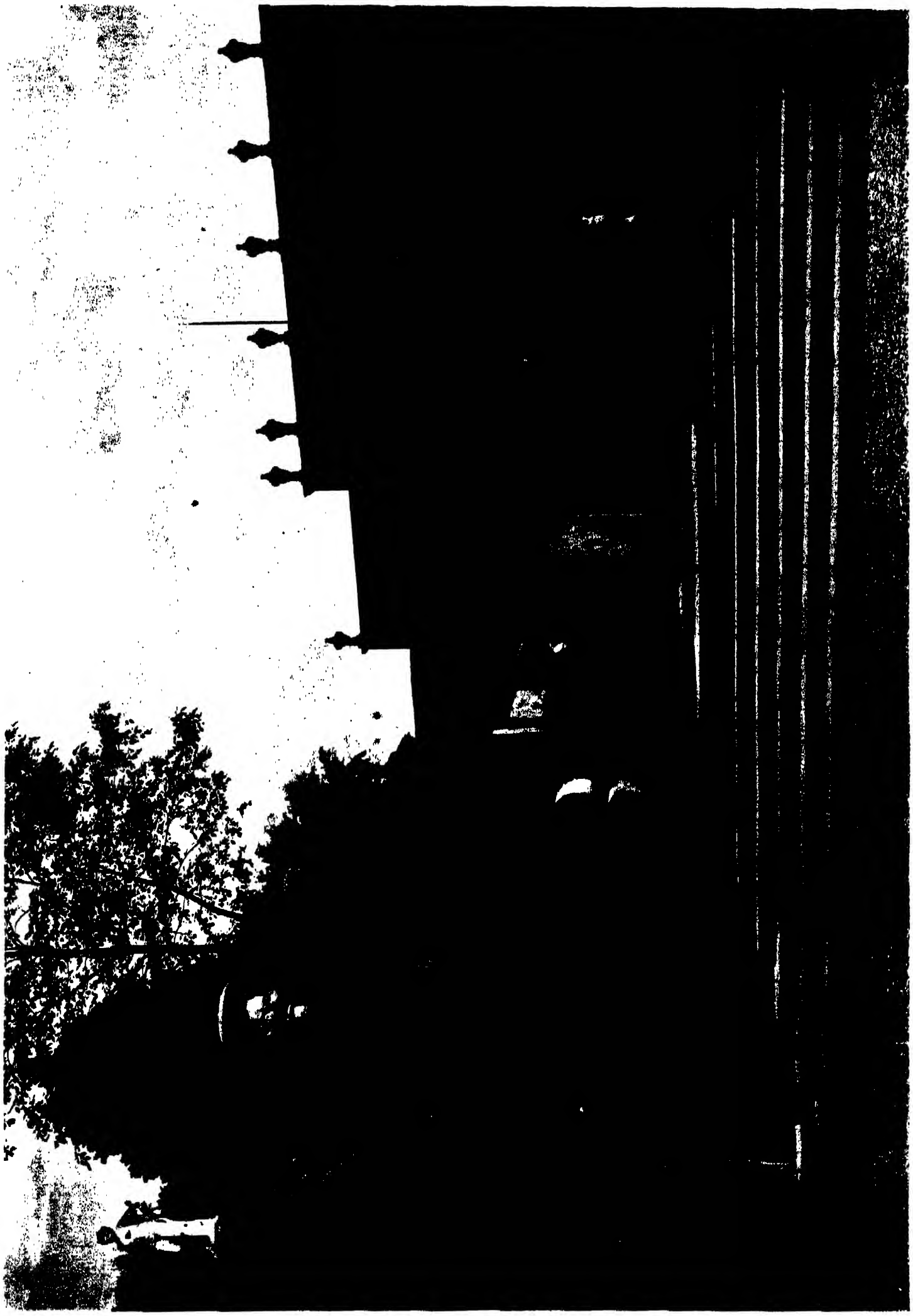
VILLA SALVIATI.



A MEDIÆVAL TOWER.



SOUTH ASPECT OF THE ORANGERIES.



WEST TERRACE, COURT GARDEN.

SHELTERED WALK OF THE ILEX.

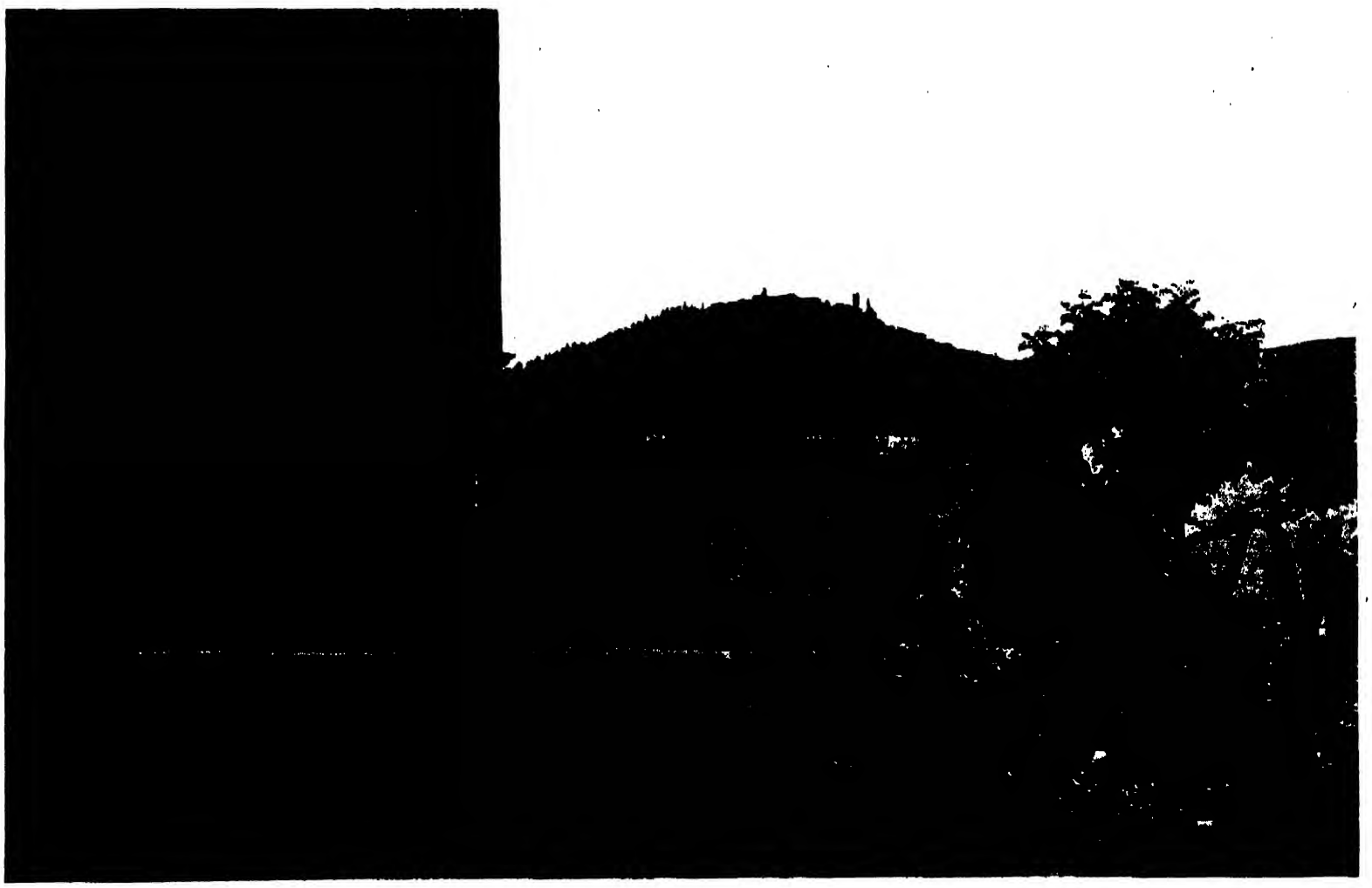
VILLA SALVIATI.

ORANGE TREES ON WESTERN TERRACE

THE COURT GARDEN.

VILLA SALVIATI.

GARDEN BOUNDARY



SOUTH-EAST CORNER.

VILLA SALVIATI.

FOUNTAIN OF JOVE.

VILLA MEDICI,

FLORENCE.

WHEN we stand on the terrace at Villa Medici and think of the records there of Lorenzo, we do not think of the cruel victor of Volterra, or of the destroyer of Florentine liberty, but rather of the man who was the dear friend and patron of the most cultivated and refined minds of his day; and of all the Medicean villas, none was more intimately interwoven than this one with the lives of the most interesting of that group. Three men stand out, interesting and distinguished, in that age of remarkable personalities—Marsilio Ficino, the philosopher, the refined, mystical thinker, whose delicate health was combined with extraordinary literary activity. He was a priest and secular teacher, and preached very often, both in his own parish church and in Florence. His pupils were devoted to him, and he kept up a large correspondence with them. His great work was the translation of Plato, which no doubt had a deep influence on the thought of the day. He made many other translations, and left some original work and a mass of very interesting correspondence with such men as the Medici, Federigo da Montefeltro, and Bembo.

In spite of all the honours paid him, he remained simple and unpretending, loving a quiet life, often melancholy, though with those he loved he was cheerful and sympathetic. In his later years he was a constant visitor of Lorenzo, at one or other of his villas, and to his last hour Lorenzo was attached to him, and describes him as "Marsilio, whom heaven has filled with its own especial grace." The man who was in closest relation to Lorenzo was that Angelo Poliziano whose name is so connected with Villa Medici. He was commended to Lorenzo, while still young, as the translator of the "Iliad." The young Head of the House became his friend, and through all changes Poliziano loved him, till he stood by his death-bed. He became a great poet, and his verses, the "Stanzas," the "Sylvæ," "Rusticus," are counted among the gems of the Italian language.

The third of this delightful trio was Pico della Mirandola, younger than the others and leaving little of finished work behind him when he died at two-and-thirty; he yet has left the impress of a personality that has defied time. His is the most brilliant figure of that brilliant circle. We are familiar with the description of his tall, slender, well-knit form, and the handsome face "from which something divine seemed to shine," his costly dress and abstruse learning, and the simplicity and sweetness of character which drew all hearts to him.

Those who climb to the fresh air of Villa Medici will think with interest of Poliziano's letter, written after Lorenzo had installed him there, to Marsilio Ficino: "If the summer heat oppress thee at Careggi, the cooler air of Fiesole will be pleasant to thee. We have plenty of water between the slopes of the hills, and while gentle winds constantly refresh us, the glare of the sun troubles us little. The neighbourhood is thickly peopled, yet I find here the quiet that suits me. But I will tempt thee with yet another attraction. Pico sometimes wanders beyond the limit of his own grounds, breaks in unexpectedly on my solitude and carries me away from my shady garden to his evening meal."

In the autumn of 1478 Lorenzo sent Poliziano to Fiesole with his wife and children. Clarice di Medici was a good and careful mother, and Poliziano seems to have been a devoted tutor, but the two did not get on. Poliziano was bored with her, and longing to be again with Lorenzo. "We get on as well as we can," he writes, after a time, "but I cannot escape a few collisions." Presently matters came to an open breach; they had moved to Careggi, where it rained every day. Poliziano sat by the fire in dressing-gown and slippers, a prey to melancholy, and only rousing himself to quarrel with his employer's wife, who, not unnaturally, wished to have a voice in teaching her children. So Lorenzo sent him back to Fiesole, where he wrote Latin verses on the view and the winding Arno.

He was a great believer in witches, and in an address to his students he says, "In the neighbourhood of my little villa at Fiesole there is a little brook, hidden by the shadow of the hillside, and the women of the place say that it is a place of meeting for the witches." In the

neighbourhood of Villa Medici there are even yet traces of the witch-traditions of the Middle Ages; on the northern slope of the hill, the subterranean chambers of the Roman theatre are still called by the country people the Witches' Caves (*Bacche delle Fate*).

Among these friends Lorenzo passed perhaps his happiest hours, discussing philosophy and politics, and writing verses and sonnets. Poliziano speaks of these visits in his poem "Rusticus:"

"Such was my song, with idle thought
In Fiesole's cool grottoes wrought,
Where from the Medici's retreat
On that famed mount, beneath my feet
The Tuscan city I survey,
And winding Arno, far away.
Here sometime at happy leisure,
Bounteous Lorenzo takes his pleasure
His friends to entertain and feast
(Of Phœbus' sons, himself not least),
Offering a haven, safe and free,
To storm-tossed ships of Poesy."

The following sonnet on a present of violets, by Lorenzo himself, shows that he was really a poet:

"Not from bright cultured gardens, where sweet airs
Steal softly round the rose's terraced home,
Into thy white hand, Lady, have we come;
Deep in dark dingles are our wild wood lairs,
Where once came Venus racked with aching cares,
Seeking Adonis through our leafy gloam:
Hither and thither vainly doth she roam,
Till her bare foot a felon bramble tears.
To catch the sacred blood that from above
Dripped off the leaves, our small white flowers we spread:
Whence came that purple hue that now is ours.
Not summer airs, nor rills from far springs led
Have nursed our beauty; but by tears of love
Our roots were watered, love-sighs formed our flowers."

Villa Medici had, however, a darker association for Lorenzo. It was when he was staying here as a youth, with his brother Giuliano, that the Pazzi conspiracy was formed against him. It had been the intention of the conspirators to commit the murder when they went to dine with Lorenzo at Fiesole, and it was only after they found that Giuliano would be absent, that they transferred their attempt to the cathedral; the lifting of the Host was to give the signal. Giuliano was murdered, and Lorenzo, who escaped by his coolness and presence of mind, took a terrible vengeance on the assassins.

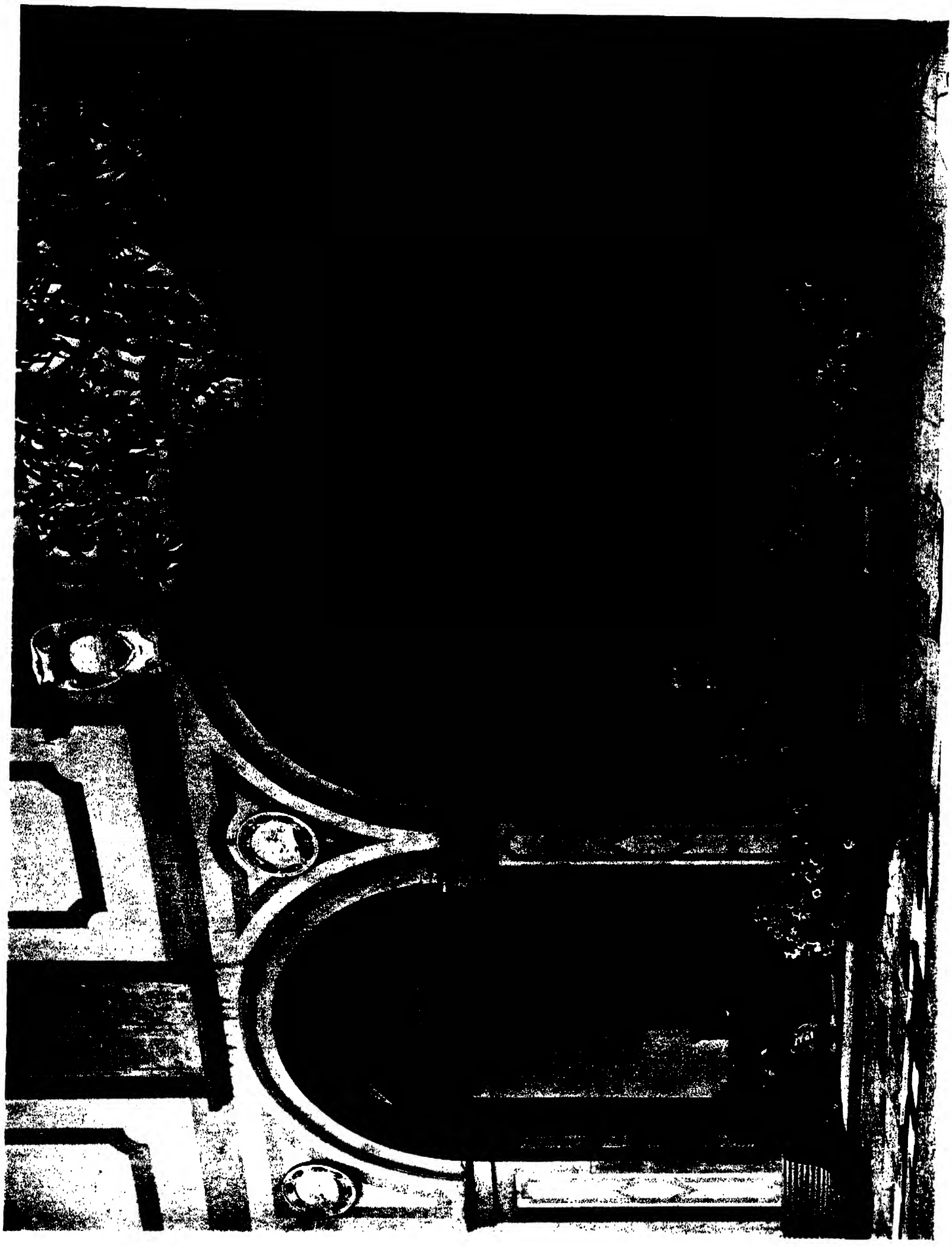
The villa, which was built by Michelozzo Michelozzi for Lorenzo's father, has been transformed into an eighteenth century house, but the arched rooms are there; there must always have been the terrace in front, and the glory of Villa Medici is its view. It stands high upon the hillside, with the ground dropping swiftly below, and there lies the whole landscape—Florence spreads over the valley, the low violet hills bound the horizon, Arno winds like a white ribbon, bells come soft through the delicious mountain air.

Why does the place bring those men so vividly before one, as one gazes at the blue distance over which time has passed unchanged, at the olives making a silver tracery against it, at the cypresses, velvet spires as green as when Benozzo Gozzoli set his palette? From this spot Lorenzo and Giuliano rode down on that April day to the Duomo, which they could see far away in the valley, on that expedition from which one of them was never to come back. Here they gathered those they loved around them, in the intervals of that thronging life, and we know they felt that thought and leisure and friendship were still the best things it had to give.

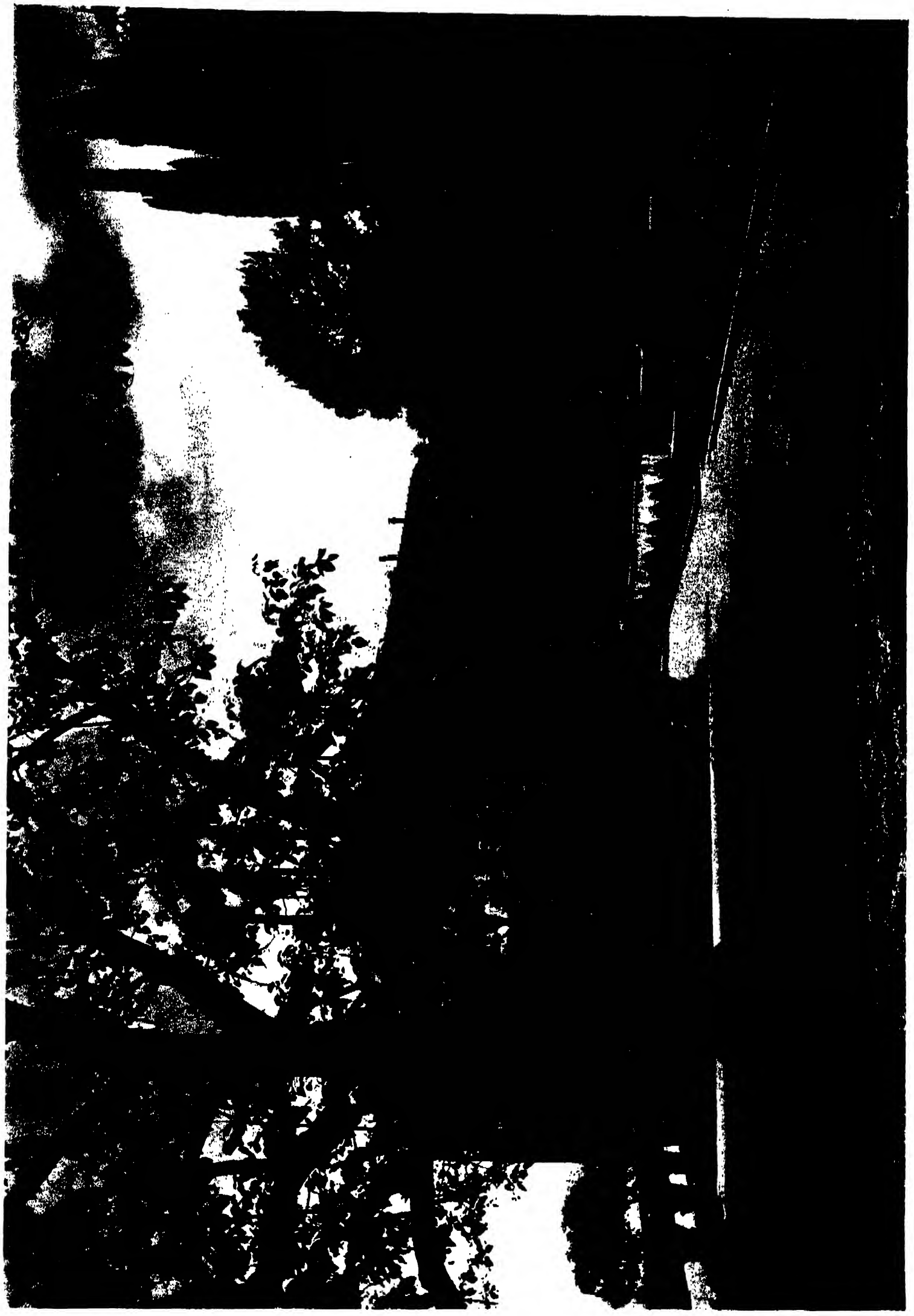
"Once more the world's great age begins anew,
Once more the blossoms of that marvellous spring unclose."

As the sun sinks behind the purple Carrara mountains we picture the group who once often watched it from this terrace: the Magnificent Medici, dark, saturnine, sympathetic, the man of marvellous tact and variety, with his brilliant friends, full of wit and grave discourse and social gossip, the music of Plato or Homer sounding in their ears. "Then when the stream of thought begins to weary, Pulci breaks the silence with a bran-new canto of Morgante, or a singing-boy is bidden to tune his mandoline to Messer Angelo's last-named *ballata*."

VILLA MEDICI.



VILLA MEDICI.



S. 10

VILLA MEDICI.

THE DRIVE IN.

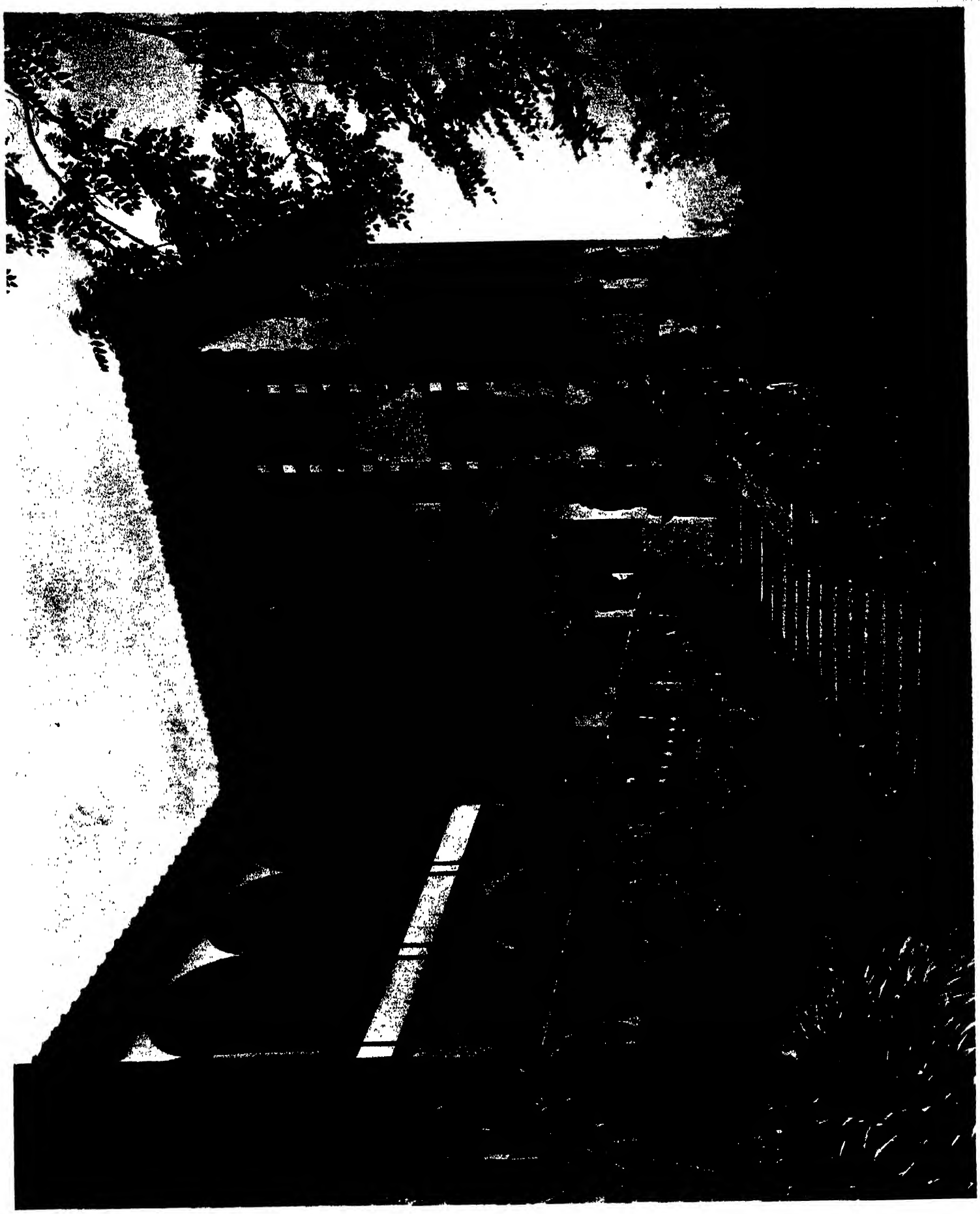
THE DRIVE OUT.

VILLA I COLLAZZI, GALLUZZO, FLORENCE.

ALONG drive from Florence, up into the mountains, past the huge, straggling pile of the Certosa, poised upon its eminence, up, until the country changes and the greater number of villas lie below, the pine woods begin, and all around, as far as eye can reach, the mountains lie in undulating waves, no accentuated ups and downs, but gently tossing fold over fold, till it is almost possible to imagine that it really is a distant sea upon which we look. At last, boldly planted on a sharp ridge, approached through a black cypress avenue, we reach the most splendid and stately of all the Florentine villas. The impression made at once is different from that of any other. The whole effect is one of austere majesty. The quality Michael Angelo could impart to all his work is present here, the breadth, the simplicity, the purity. As we stand in front of that lofty, two-storied arcade, which is built round three sides of a raised stone-flagged terrace and enclosed by a majestic balustrade and double stairway, guarded by two black stone lions, bearing shields, we breathe freely. The lines of the building give a sense of nobility and elevation; the master mind that designed it knew nothing of the frivolous or the paltry. Absolute proof that he was the architect may be lacking, but the spirit of Michael Angelo speaks to us louder than any contract. Tradition, indeed, gives it to him. He is known to have been an intimate friend of that Agostino Dini for whom the villa was built in the sixteenth century, on the site where once stood a castle of the Buondelmonte. The Dini papers have unluckily been destroyed, but Baldinucci tells us that Santi di Tito, a pupil of the schools of Bronzino and Vasari, "worked for Agostino Dini at Giogoli . . . for the same Agostino he also painted one of his finest pictures." It is, of course, quite possible that he carried out the work from the design of the greater master. The picture, "A Marriage in Cana," is still in the chapel—it is, in fact, painted upon the panelled wall, and it is evident that the master turned his head and drew the long arcade, which met his eyes in the courtyard beyond the chapel window. The court has a fine old well-head of stone and ironwork, and opposite it is an ancient stone cistern. One of the wings of the house has never been finished, but the effect is to give a variety which is rather good than otherwise. It is fortunate that the villa is quite unspoilt. The high, gently-vaulted saloons still retain their heavy walnut doors, with brass mountings, and their Renaissance chimney-pieces, and though in the eighteenth century some attempt was made to redecorate, it is very slight, and consists in a few very charming frescoes by Menucci and Boti, and sundry painted doors. The central saloon opens out at the back upon a circular *perron* of worn stone, a double flight of steps curving down into the garden. On this side, the plainness of the walls is relieved by pediments and consoles, and by a singularly beautiful loggia with slender double columns. The stone setting of the doorway, surmounted by a carved escutcheon, has the same quality of stately simplicity. The terrace surrounding the house is enclosed in a low parapet, built upon high bastioned walls, over which you lean and look into the valley below. From the front of the villa the landscape is sunny and the country thickly populated with gleaming villas, while down in the valley, beyond the shoulder of a far-off wooded curve, the brown dome and the slender shaft of Giotto's tower are just visible. At the back the outlook is much wilder. The cypresses climb the hill on the other side of the deep fall in the ground. It is such a hillside as Benozzo Gozzoli loved to paint, and we could fancy we saw his brilliant youths in broidered surcoats, winding in gay procession along the country-side. Beyond, the hills are dark with pine woods, which stretch away fold on fold as far as Montelupo. To the right lie the mountains behind Pistoia, and the domes and towers of both that city and Prato in the plain beneath are plainly visible upon a clear day. The Dini named their splendid villa I Collazzi, the hillocks or mounts, because of these undulating hills which flow all round it. Immediately under the wall, at the back of the house, is the *giardino segreto*, and here the old Italian fashion has been adhered to; there are few flowers, and the chief adornment consists of fine lemon trees in huge terra-cotta vases, symmetrically arranged. The ground falls away below so abruptly as to afford little scope for flower-gardening.

It is a villa with little history. The Dini family lived in it till about sixty years ago, when it passed into the hands of the Bombicci-Pomi, who live here nearly all the year round. Perhaps it was too far off the beaten track to be fashionable and far enough to escape perils. It seems always to have been, what it is to-day, a beautiful and well-loved home.

VILLA I COLLAZZI.



EAST WING OF THE VILLA.

THE OPEN COURT. SOUTH FRONT.

VILLA I COLLAZZI.

CASTELLO AND PETRAJA.

IN contrast to the stately Poggio Imperiale, or Poggio a Cajano, second in interest to the old Medici villas, the Royal House of Italy owns two small, almost homely, villas, seldom occupied, but thoroughly liveable, and not without their own share of historic interest.

It is something of a mystery why the Medici should have wished to build two small villas close together, as these are. They were both built by Buontalenti, the architect who helped to plan the gardens of the Pitti Palace. Castello lies low, and its façade fronts the high road, an arrangement the Italian architects were very fond of where the space was small. The ground behind the villa runs backward to a high retaining wall. In the middle stands a stately fountain by Tribolo, and when Montaigne visited it he wrote of its *berceaux*, or pleached walks, and of its cypress groves; but these have been sacrificed to the fashion of modern gardening, which has spoilt so many of these old pleasaunces.

Between the great lemon houses at the back is a large and fantastic grotto, with arabesques of coloured shellwork and groups of nearly life-size animals, comic and grotesque—a unicorn, a camel with a monkey on its back, deer, a wild boar with real tusks, and birds and other animals. It is difficult to understand how these grottoes should ever have been thought beautiful; but as a cool retreat for a summer's day, where the maidenhair fern hung in a green curtain, and the water rushed or dripped from every conduit, they were unrivalled. It has a fine fountain by Gian Bologna, the wrestling figures on which recall Pollaiuolo's group of Hercules and Antæus. Mr. Latham shows us the fountain in detail, and the photograph of the East Garden explains exactly where it stands.

Perhaps the most interesting character whom the villa has ever received was Catherine Sforza, who lived here for the last seven years of her life. Gone, then, was that beauty, which is described as glowing like the sun, as rivalling lilies and roses. Her wild and revengeful persecution of her first and second husbands' murderers had faded into the past, and having married Giovanni de Medici, she retired to Castello, and devoted herself to the training of her little boy, that Giovanni de Medici who was to be so widely known as Giovanni delle Bande Nero, the last of the great *Condottieri*.

It was in 1504 that he joined his mother there, and she bought him "a small and handsome horse." The mother of Cosimo I. died at Castello, to which Cosimo himself returned after his secret marriage with Camilla Martelli, and it was from here that he sent that vigorous message: "I am not the first Prince who has taken a vassal to wife, and I shall not be the last; my wife is of gentle birth, and is to be respected as such. I do not seek for quarrels, but I shall not avoid them if they are forced upon me. When I make up my mind to do a thing, I do it regardless of consequences, trusting in God and my own right hand."

A charming walk through an ilex wood and meadow leads to where Petraja hangs along the hill. Halfway, is an exquisite little campanile and chapel, half hidden in a group of cypresses, which the country people proudly call *la meraviglia di Castello*.

As we approach it, Petraja stands in striking lines, the tower, which recalls that of the Palazzo Vecchio, rising from a shoulder of ilexes, the long walls sloping down into the valley, while beyond show the towers and dome of the City of the Lily.

The villa of Petraja is a simple white house with broad eaves, its squareness relieved by the tower. It stands in the usual formal garden, which is well kept and full of flowers. Every day flowers are sent off from here to the Royal palace at the Quirinal. On one side of the villa stands a huge ilex tree with a rustic staircase leading into its branches, where there is a platform on which Victor Emmanuel used to dine when he and his wife "Rosina" were staying at Petraja or Castello. On the other side is a fountain, the masterpiece of Tribolo, which was brought here from Castello by the Grand Duke Pietro Leopoldo. Vasari says of it: "Il Tribolo carved on the marble base a mass of marine monsters, all plump and undercut, with tails so curiously twisted together that nothing better can be done in that style. Having finished it, he took a marble basin, brought to Castello long before. . . . In the throat, near to the edge of the said basin, he made a circle of dancing boys holding certain festoons of marine creatures, carved with excellent imagination out of the marble; also the stem to go above the said basin he executed with much grace, with boys and masks for spouting out water, of great beauty, and on the top of

this stem Tribolo placed a bronze female figure a yard and a-half high to represent Florence . . . of which figure he made a most beautiful model wringing the water out of her hair with her hands." Many critics pronounce this figure to have been executed by Giovanni Bologna.

The villa was stormed in 1364 by the Pisans with their English and German allies. It then belonged to the Brunelleschi, and the young sons of the house made a gallant defence, and succeeded in repulsing the enemy. Cosimo I., when wishing to escape from the cares of State, passed most of his time at Petraja. A little villa on the hillside above was lent by him to Varchi, the historian, who entertained all the notable visitors to Florence of the day, not least the celebrated courtesan Tullia of Arragon, one of those ladies of the late Renaissance whose wise and witty converse and rare beauty and accomplishments, made her a personage in the society of the great and learned. Her picture by Bonvicino at Brescia shows us the lovely woman to whom poets addressed such passionate verses—the owner of those

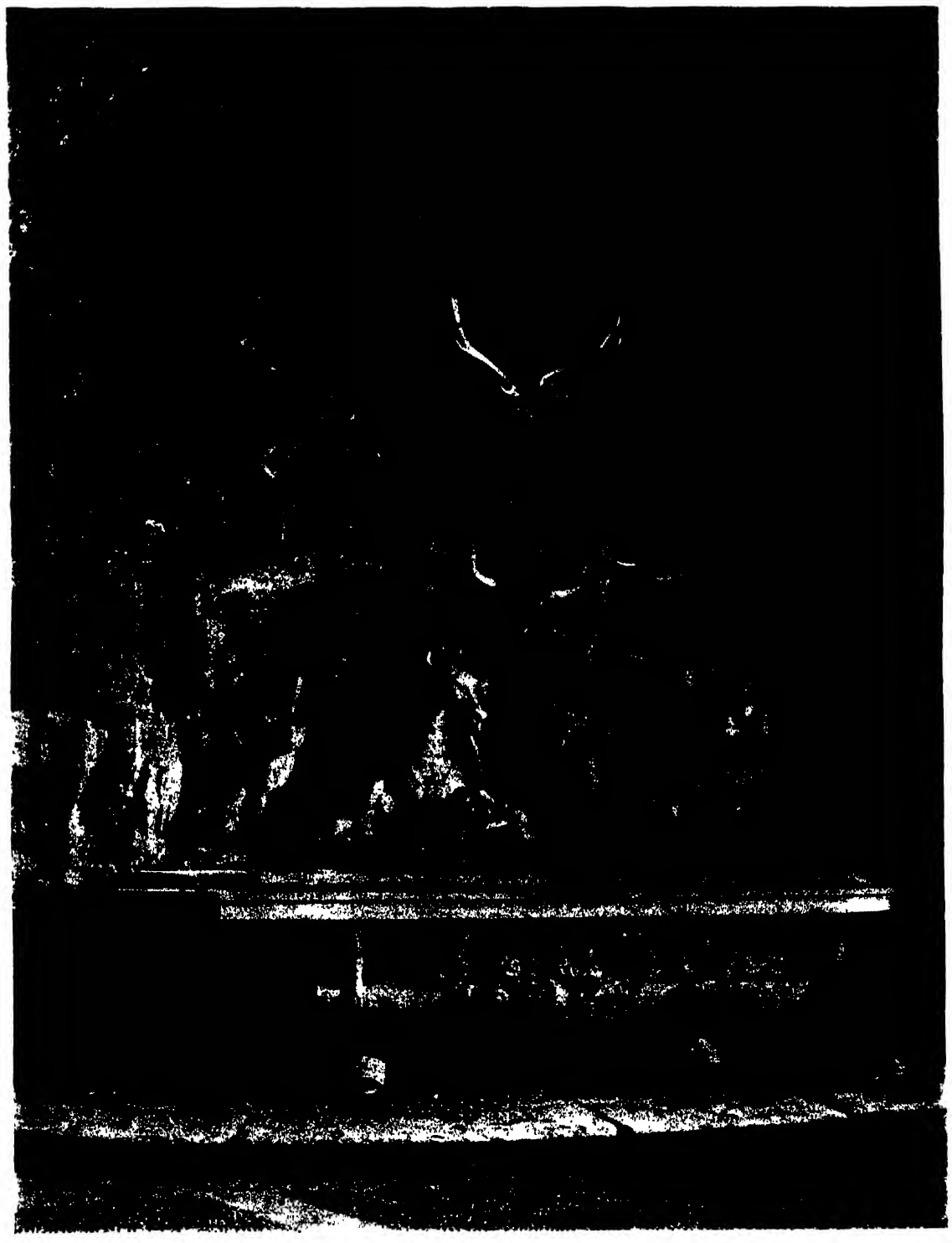
> "beautiful eyes,
> Glancing eyes, loving eyes and dear,
> More brilliant than the sun, and than the stars more fair,"

of which Muzio writes.

Cosimo's son, Cardinal Ferdinand, commissioned Buontalenti to enlarge and improve the villa, but the historian Amminato, to whom the Cardinal lent Petraja, so that he might write his history of Florence in retirement, is persuaded that the tower was not touched and is the same that was assaulted by the Pisan army under the command of Sir John Hawkwood, in the fourteenth century.

CASTELLO AND PETRAJA.

CASTELLO—FOUNTAIN BY GIAN BOLOGNA.



A FOUNTAIN OF COLOURED M.

CASTELLO AND PETRAJA.

VILLA GAMBERAIA,

FLORENCE.

"IF you get pure beauty, you get about the best thing God has to give." Long ago, so spoke an old painter, and his words came back to me again and yet again as on a June afternoon I strayed in Villa Gamberaia. (A villa, I may explain, in Italy means not only the house, but the grounds as well.) From the moment that you pass the gate, with its sentinel cypresses, the impression is one of such perfect loveliness that at last, by force of contrast, the mind goes back to strong Caprarola or tragic Este, only to turn once more to bathe in the perfection of the Tuscan villa.

An old villa has been taken, unspoiled, unchanged, and put into hands, loving and full of knowledge, the hands of owners who in restoring, are careful not to go too far and yet who have initiative, who are not afraid to show that the world has gone forward, and that to-day can add beauty even to the most beautiful creations of yesterday.

Gamberaia stands on a long, narrow piece of land; it is not large, but it is utilised and managed so as to give all that the mind can desire of variety, and space itself. It is a marvel of deft planning. From the short entrance alley the visitor emerges on the long bowling green of soft rich turf, an avenue than which nothing can be more perfect. On one side is set the house, the cream-washed villa, with wide eaves and heavy mouldings, on the other, a high retaining wall, crowned with statues and old vases of pink geraniums; the bowling alley stretches far beyond and far behind. In front, where the eye naturally turns, the grass ends in a balustrade surmounted by one graceful statue, flanked by old fir trees, and far away the hills and valleys faint into the blue distance. Turn and look towards the other end, and past the masses of climbing pink blossoms. The green closes in a circular grotto of coloured pebbles and shells, an arch, a balustrade, beyond which, high against a turquoise sky, the dark, dainty finger-tips of cypresses point upwards, standing in a line, and fuller and more rugged ones close in and descend on either hand.

The bowling green, long and very narrow, runs the whole length of the grounds. We pass through the house, cool and gay, with marble floors and flowery cotton coverings, and come out on the western façade to, again, a narrow grass strip, but not so long, and bounded by a balustrade on which stand vases and solemn stone dogs. Leaning over, or sitting, if you like best, on the broad low parapet, you can look down on a gravel quarter-deck, the length of the bowling green, along which grow roses and poppies, and which in wet weather makes a good dry parade. The house has a light open arcade thrown out on either side, and to the south is an oblong piece of ground, which, when the present owners took it, was nothing but a rough and neglected half-vineyard, half-kitchen garden, which had been used for many years as a sort of utility-plot. It is now the water-garden, and huge tanks are covered with white and pink water-lilies; fountains play in all directions, and the one old fountain which was found there still occupies the place of honour in the middle. They think it must be from a design of Ammanati's, for half effaced as it is, it still shows a master's touch. A boy riding a dolphin, a common device enough; but how this boy rides! with what arrogant mischief the imp bestrides his aquatic mount, and balances the fountain basin on his confident head. Thanks to all this water, there are flowers in profusion. The roses are quiet for the moment, after their summer bloom, and are preparing for that of the autumn, but oleanders make a rosy tracery against the blue sky; geraniums of every shade flood the stone vases; tall white lilies are just passing over. The whole is a feast of pure colour against backgrounds of clipped dark green. At the farther end, a circular arcade of yews show up marble columns twined with roses and shade stone seats, and of course the lemon trees stand everywhere along the stone-paved paths in their great terra-cotta pots.

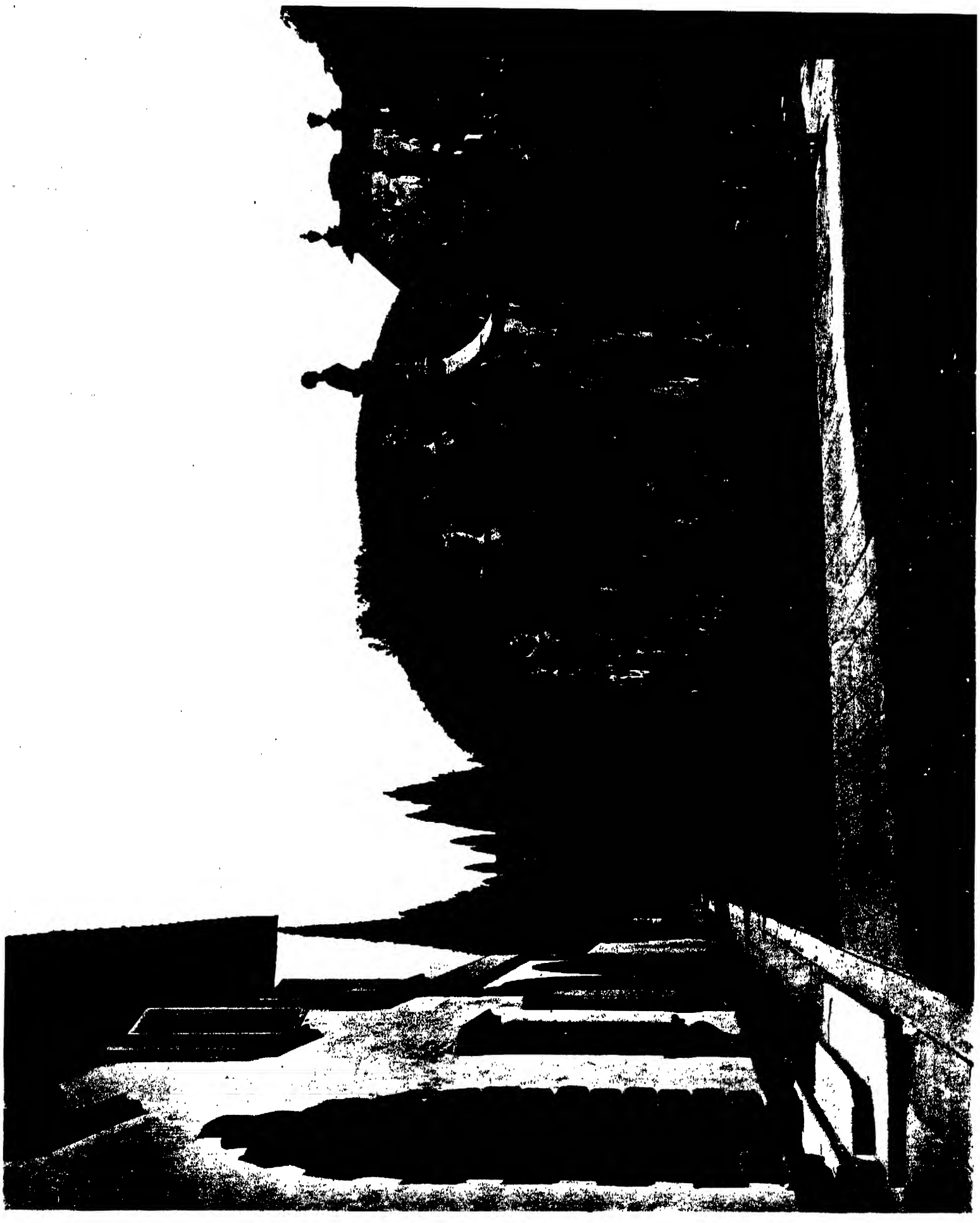
From the bowling green we pass through the wall to a terraced wood. The wood is quite small, but like a little cathedral, so dark and dim, with stone seats under the dense boughs, and then without warning, we come out again into a little grotto garden, with fountain and rococo statues and balustraded flights of steps which lead up

to a lemon garden, backed by the lemon-house, the *stanzone* which one finds in every old Italian garden, where all the half-hardy plants can be stored in the winter. Beyond this again lies the real wood, with winding walks under ilexes and cypresses, and little encampments of tables and seats, a cool place even in the midday glare. The garden is wonderfully spaced and full of surprises. Coming back to the bowling green we pass an inconspicuous opening in the stiff hedge which borders a portion of it, and may step into a retired nook, quite cut off from the rest, dressed with roses and irises, and looking down upon what a sea of grey-green olives. It signifies so little that a garden like this is not very large, for away on every hand stretches the larger garden of the laughing Italian country-side, in such soft waves of melting colours, that it is immaterial where the exact boundaries end.

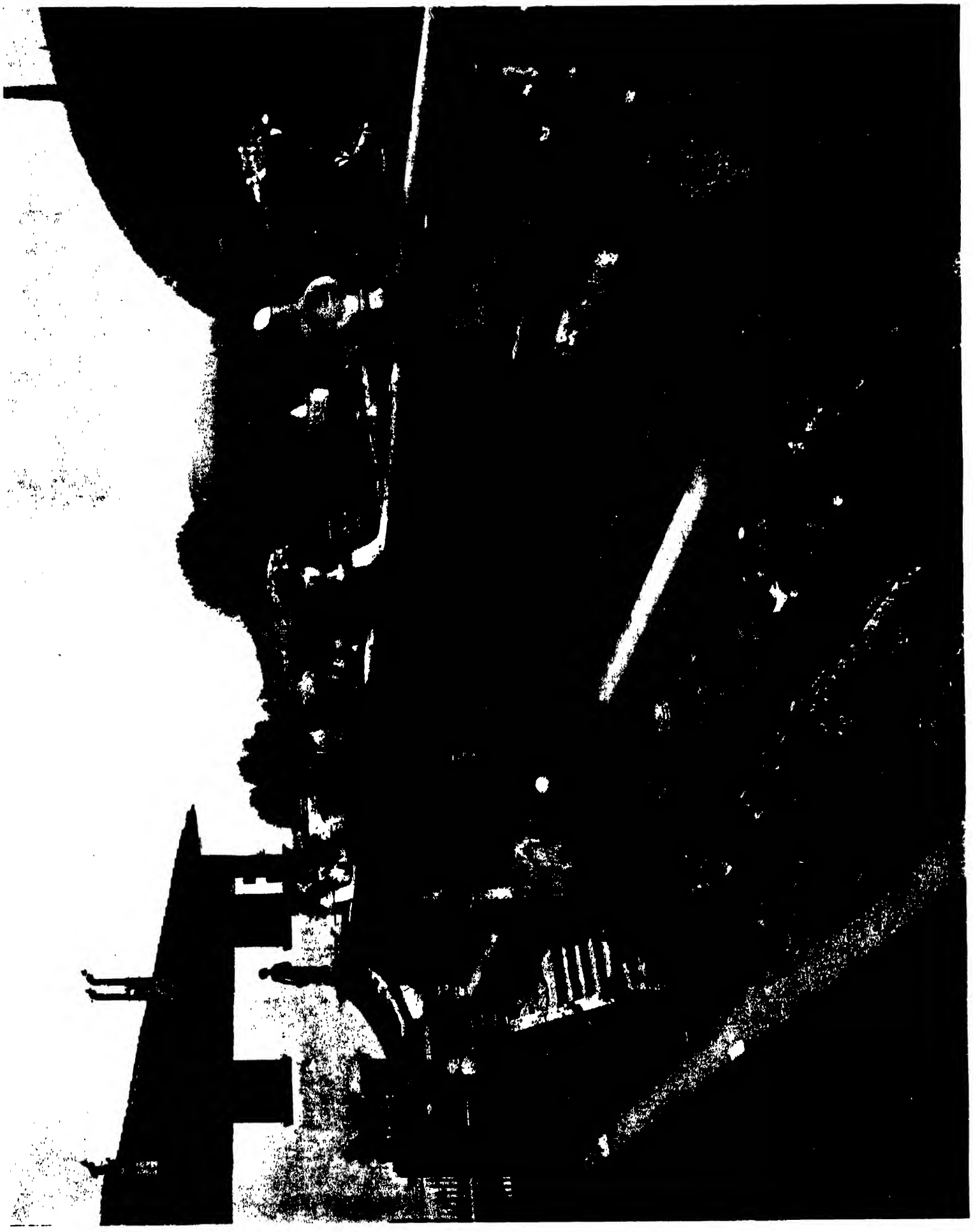
From a broken shield dug up in 1900, inscribed "Zenobius Lapius Fundavit, M.D.C.X.," it seems probable that the villa was erected for the Lapi family. The name of the architect is not forthcoming, but it has an elegance and simplicity in the arrangement of the small courtyard with pillars in the centre and the graceful flying balconies which take off its squareness, which indicate some very capable master of the late Renaissance, perhaps Ammanati, or one of his pupils. Numerous contracts and lawsuits exist connected with the water supply for the fountains. In 1619 Zenobi Lapi died, leaving the property to two nephews, Jacopo di Andrea Lapi and Andrea di Cosimo Lapi, and failing heirs from them it was to be divided between the Capponi and Cerretani families. In 1624 Jacopo died, leaving a young son. His uncle "The most illustrious Signore Cosimo Lapi, a noble Florentine," laid out the inlaid grottoes, and developed a perfect passion for making fountains and *jeux d'eaux*. In 1636 one poor lady, a Signora Aurelia, brings an action against him, complaining that he has cut off necessary water from her villa by the reservoirs he has made. Not unnaturally he left his property much in debt, and when his nephew Andrea died in 1688, the estate was heavily mortgaged. Andrea's son, another Jacopo, died in 1717 without heirs male, and the Capponi and Cerretani dividing the Lapi property, Gamberaia fell to the former. It is to Andrea, without doubt, that we owe the bowling green and the dark cypresses and stone statues. The old villa has changed hands many times since then, and was even at one time let out in lodgings for the summer. Fortunately it has never been spoilt, and it now belongs to two ladies, Princess Ghika and Miss Blood. Both ladies are artists, and in their hands the villa becomes every year more beautiful.

VILLA GAMBERAIA.

VILLA GAMBERAIA.



VILLA GAMBERAIA.

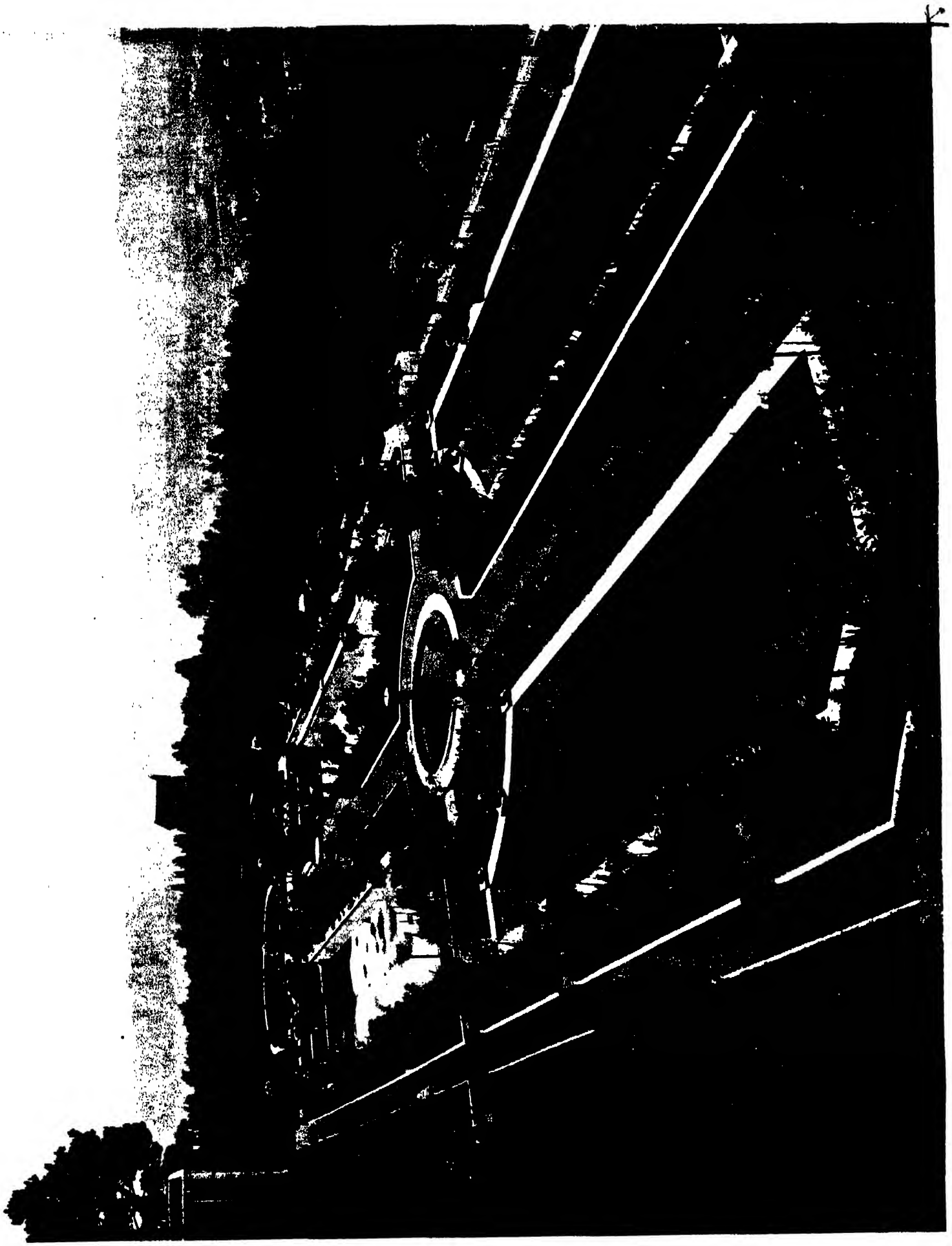


THE TERRACE GARDEN.

THE TERRACE GARDEN FROM THE NORTH.

VILLA GAMBERAIA.

ON THE LIMONAIA TERRACE.



WESTERN GARDEN, FROM THE VILLA BALCONY.

VILLA GAMBERAIA.

TERMINAL OF THE WESTERN GARDEN.

VILLA GAMBERAIA.

GARDEN WALL.

VILLA GAMBERAIA.

SHELTERED BY ILEX HEDGE.

THE WAY OUT.

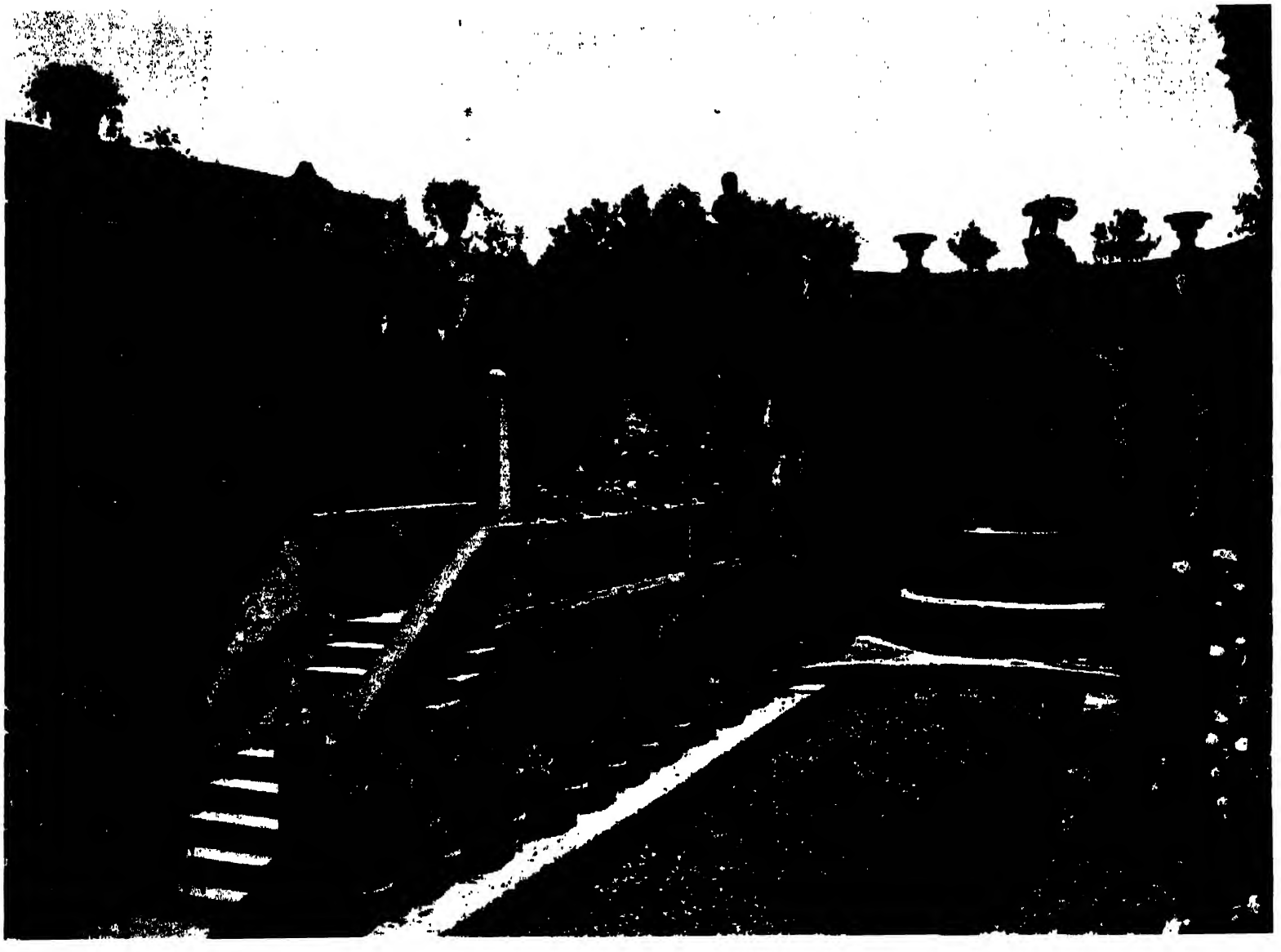
VILLA GAMBERAIA.

NORTH-EAST CORNER OF THE VILLA.

WALL OF THE LIMONAIA GARDEN.

VILLA GAMBERAIA.

LIMONAIA.



THE TERRACE GARDEN, FROM BOWLING GREEN GATE.

VILLA CAPPONI,

FLORENCE.

NO one who knows the environs of Florence can fail to be struck by the enormous number of old villas which cluster upon all her hills for many miles round. The love of Italians for country life has, indeed, always been intense. It has been pointed out that in Northern countries the nobles lived in their fortified castles, monks in well-guarded convents, and even the wealthiest burghers from one year's end to another in the cities; but in Italy the passion for country life was so strong, that men were willing to run immense risk in order to gratify it. Thus many a well-to-do citizen aspired to have his villa, or country house. This precious inheritance of the old Roman world was revived, and the villa became the best-loved possession upon which all expenditure was lavished.

The old Tuscan nobleman Pandolfini, in his "Governo," a sort of manual of advice to a son, written in the fifteenth century, speaks of the wealth of delightful sites round Florence, "in crystal air," with beautiful views, soft winds, good water. "Let us seek one," he says, "which affords, above all, the necessaries of life; bread, wine, oil, wood: take up a load of salt to last the family for a year and see that a road is made passing near."

All other modes of life he holds to be full of difficulty, and other possessions entail danger and disappointment; but to live on a villa or farm is to live where all is kind and gracious, and love and satisfaction in it are sure to increase. "In the spring the villa gives you flowers and verdure, birds sing and all is gay. You look forward to a laughing harvest. And how generous the land is, sending you one fruit after another so that the house is never empty. In the autumn, what unwearying store of fruit, rendering tenfold of its willing abundance. Filling the house in winter with grapes, nuts, figs, apples, and almonds. It sends wood, oil, laurel, and juniper, so that safe from snow and wind, the fire may be gay with scented flames. . . . It ought to be the refuge for good men, for the just and honest. It ought to be pleasantly spacious, so as to afford bird-catching, hunting, and fishing at the proper seasons. All live honestly, openly, in the light of day, there is no occasion for litigation and contention, no hatred or malevolence. You gaze on frowning hills and happy plains and fountains and streams leaping in the meadows and taste the delight of fleeing from the tumult of the city, the piazza, and the palace, and from all the injustice, the dishonesty and display of a crowd. In the city are finer buildings, refinement and taste, fame and glory, but in the villa, quiet, content of soul, liberty to live without worry and in steady health."

"In villas such as these," says John Addington Symonds, "or in those on the Brenta, on the Lombard hills at Posilippo, or on the Vomero, social life assumed a freer and more rural character, and we meet with charming descriptions of the intercourse of the guests, the hunting parties and all the open-air pursuits and amusements, while the noblest achievements of poetry and thought are sometimes dated from these scenes of rural peace."

Villa Capponi, standing on the hill above San Miniato, is a good example of an old fortified house which once belonged to the family of the Accoramboni, and about 1680 came into the hands of a member of the honoured house of Capponi. It was converted into a seventeenth-century residence, and is now one of the most charming English homes to be found upon the Tuscan hills. Its spacious, stone-flagged loggia looks down upon the distant city, and the garden, though small, is planned to the greatest advantage, and is a dream of beauty in the spring-time. A long strip of fine velvety turf on the east side, bordered by cypress hedges, is a survival of the old garden. The ground adjoining has been laid out with great taste, divided by beautiful walls of close-shaved green box and cypress, and an old iron gateway makes a delicious picture when the tulips crowd at the foot and banksia roses riot above. A very interesting feature of Villa Capponi is afforded by its high garden walls, in smooth tawny plaster, built in bold curves and volutes and pedestals, each pedestal crowned with an urn-shaped vase in which geraniums flourish as they can do in Italy. These seventeenth century walls make a most graceful setting, broken as their lines are by sumptuous curtains of richly-flowering roses.

The former owners must have been kin to that Claudio Accoramboni whose beautiful and infamous daughter Vittoria married the nephew of Cardinal Montalto, who built the second Villa at Lante and afterwards became Sixtus V. She schemed her first husband's murder, in order that she might marry the Duke of Bracciano, and was brutally murdered herself by Prince Lodovico Orsini, the Duke's next-of-kin.

In the tiny chapel within doors is a gay and charming altar-piece by Soliani, a late Tuscan master. Many members of the Capponi family were buried beneath the chapel pavement, but when the villa was sold the Capponi asked to be allowed to remove the bones to the seat of the head of the family, and it was a request which the present owners were not unwilling to grant.

One of the most notable objects from Villa Capponi, is Galileo's Tower, which stands just below. Here the great astronomer lived and wrote and lost his sight and died. It was either here or in a villa a little below, the Villa del Gioello, that Milton visited Galileo, and Milton must certainly have been thinking of it when he wrote :

> "May my lamp at midnight hour
> Be seen from some high, lonely tower,
> Where I may long outwatch the Bear
> With thrice great Hermes, or unsphere
> The Spirit of Plato, or unfold
> What worlds or what vast regions hold
> The immortal soul that hath forsook
> Her mansion in this fleshly nook."

For sixteen years Galileo lived in the little Villa dell Ombrellino on Bellosguardo. It was here that he composed the famous dialogues on the Copernican system, and received the visits of every learned man of the day who came up the hill to listen to his fun and wit and wisdom, and on these slopes how often on summer and winter nights :

> "Many a cypress threw
> Its length of shadow while he watched the stars."

VILLA CAPPONI.

GATEWAY OF THE UPPER LAWN.

THE ROSE GARDEN, SECOND TERRACE.

ENCLOSED GARDEN, LOWER TERRACE.

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VILLA FABRICOTTI AND VILLA STIBBERT, FLORENCE.

As we pass the imposing iron gate that leads to that villa lying on the north-west side of Florence — the villa that Marchese Fabricotti once lent to Queen Victoria, we very quickly perceive that we are in the haunt of a lover of arboriculture. Few villas have such a fine avenue of cypresses winding up their drive, and these are interspersed and the rest of the garden almost overgrown with conifers, palms, bamboos, silver firs, wellingtonias of every kind, besides numbers of small rare trees in and out of pots, and one of the largest cedars in Italy.

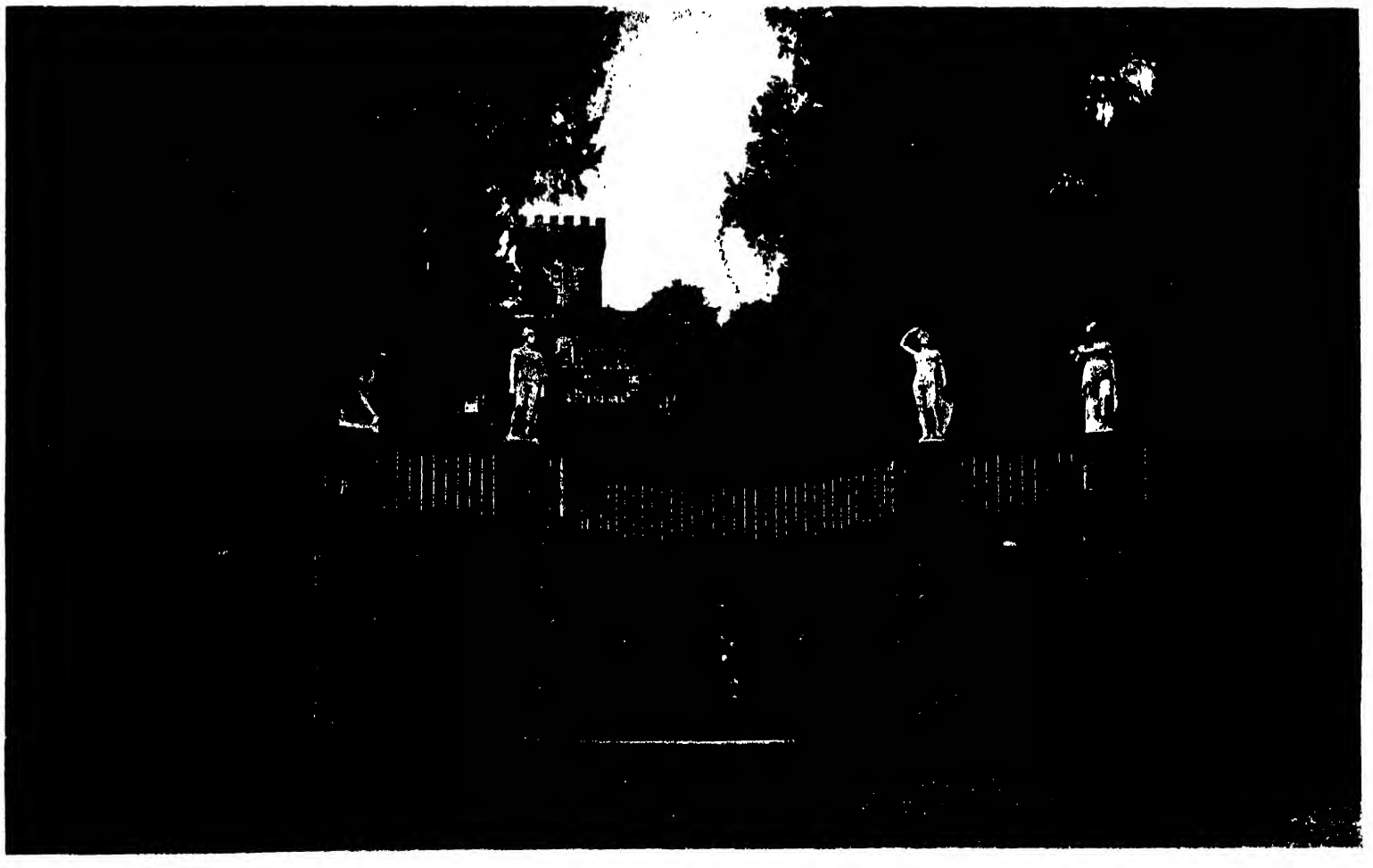
Fabricotti is a modern villa, though it stands upon the site of a hunting-lodge that belonged to the Strozzi. Most of the adornments of the garden are modern, too, with the exception of the two solemn lions which keep watch and ward on the long balustrade halfway up the ascent. The villa is built like the old ones in many ways, with an airy entrance hall, going right through the house, and a long, cheerful gallery opening on to the sunny terrace, on which great beds of rose pink phlox—very pyramids of luscious colour—glow against the background of close-cut cypresses and contrast with the gleaming white of statues. At the back of the villa are two giant horse-chestnuts, which overshadow it, and under the shade of which a colony of basket-chairs and low tables littered with books is always established in hot weather. Pauline Bonaparte Princess Borghese died in one of the rooms. The brown Duomo looks quite close at hand, for this villa is only a few minutes outside the gates, and is one of those which is occupied throughout the greater part of the year.

If the Villa Fabricotti bears evidence of its owner's love for trees, we should be equally quickly aware that Villa Stibbert belongs to an antiquary, were the fact less well known than it is. Driving up the slopes, the attention is caught every moment by some interesting piece of stonework, disposed with great care and meaning. Here is a little shrine of the renaissance, there a fine old carved well-head, set against a graceful scrolled iron rail, iron torch-holders project from the walls, and the space round the entrance is covered with shields bearing the devices of half the ancient houses of Tuscany. It is as a museum that Mr. Stibbert's residence must be regarded, for the house and garden exist for the collection, and this, it is an open secret, is to be a princely bequest to the municipality.

In the long rooms and galleries is an endless array of rare and beautiful *objets d'art*—cases of those brocaded coats, velvet suits, heavy with embroidery, silks and satins in which the gallants and ladies ruffled at the Courts of the Grand Dukes. The walls are hung with old painted leather, still brilliantly coloured, and with beautiful tapestries ; and the collection of armour, above all, must be one of the finest in the world. Not only is it very large, filling room after room, but many of the suits are richly inlaid, and the variety is so great. The balls of the Medici gleam on the shield of a knight, a Saracenic warrior is arrayed in fine chain mail, each link riveted and the whole engraved with verses from the Koran, here are Japanese suits, including one of the Royal House, complete even to the carved ivory scimitar sheath. There are suits of mail, fine and flexible as silk, and heavy buff coats of Louis XIV.'s troopers. It is strange to find this priceless collection, the work of forty years, in this secluded villa in its shady garden, and it takes a long visit to exhaust its wonders.

VILLA FABRICOTTI—FOOT OF THE CYPRESS AVENUE.

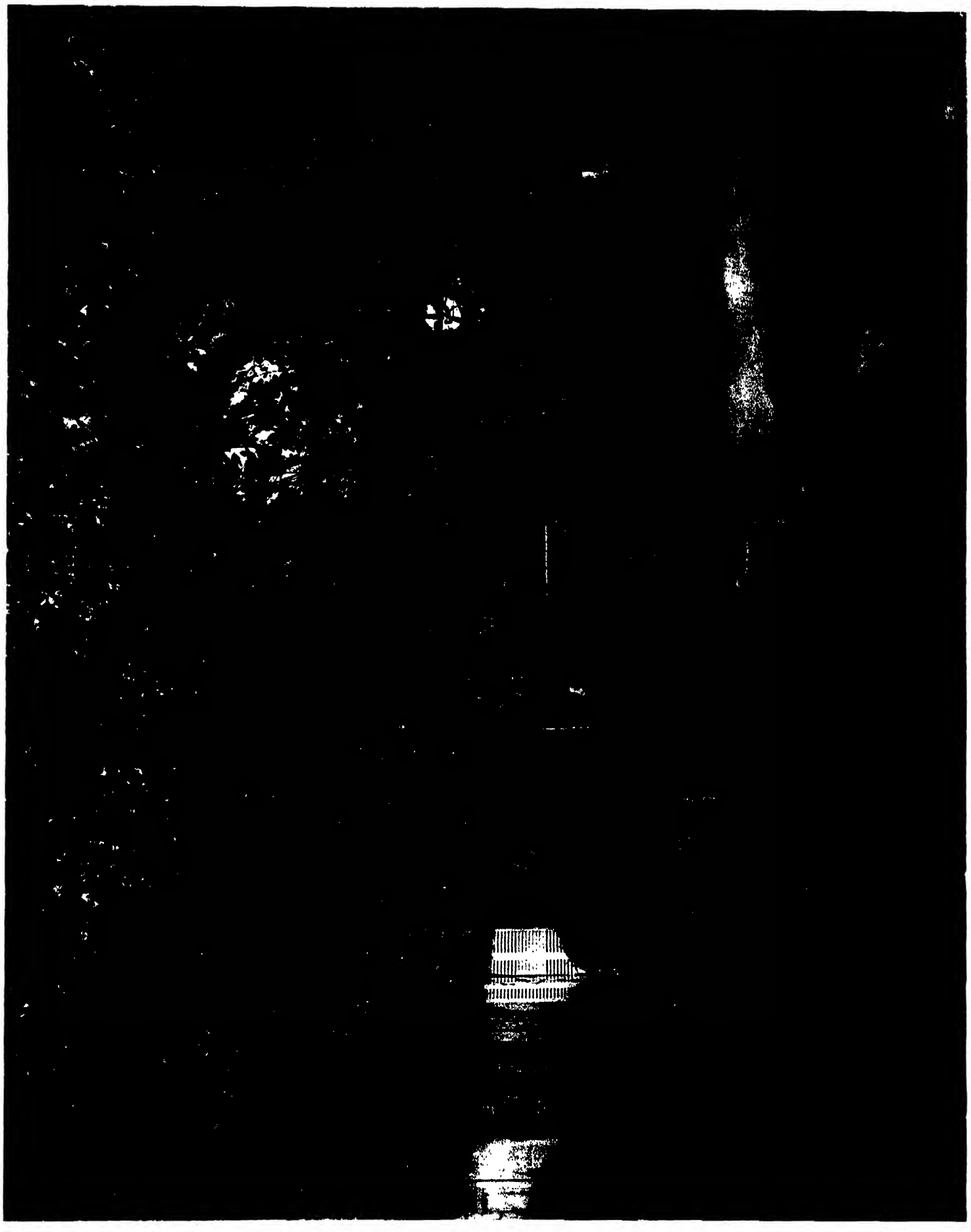
VILLA FABRICOTTI- THE SUMMIT.



VILLA FABRICOTTI--FROM GATE ENTRANCE

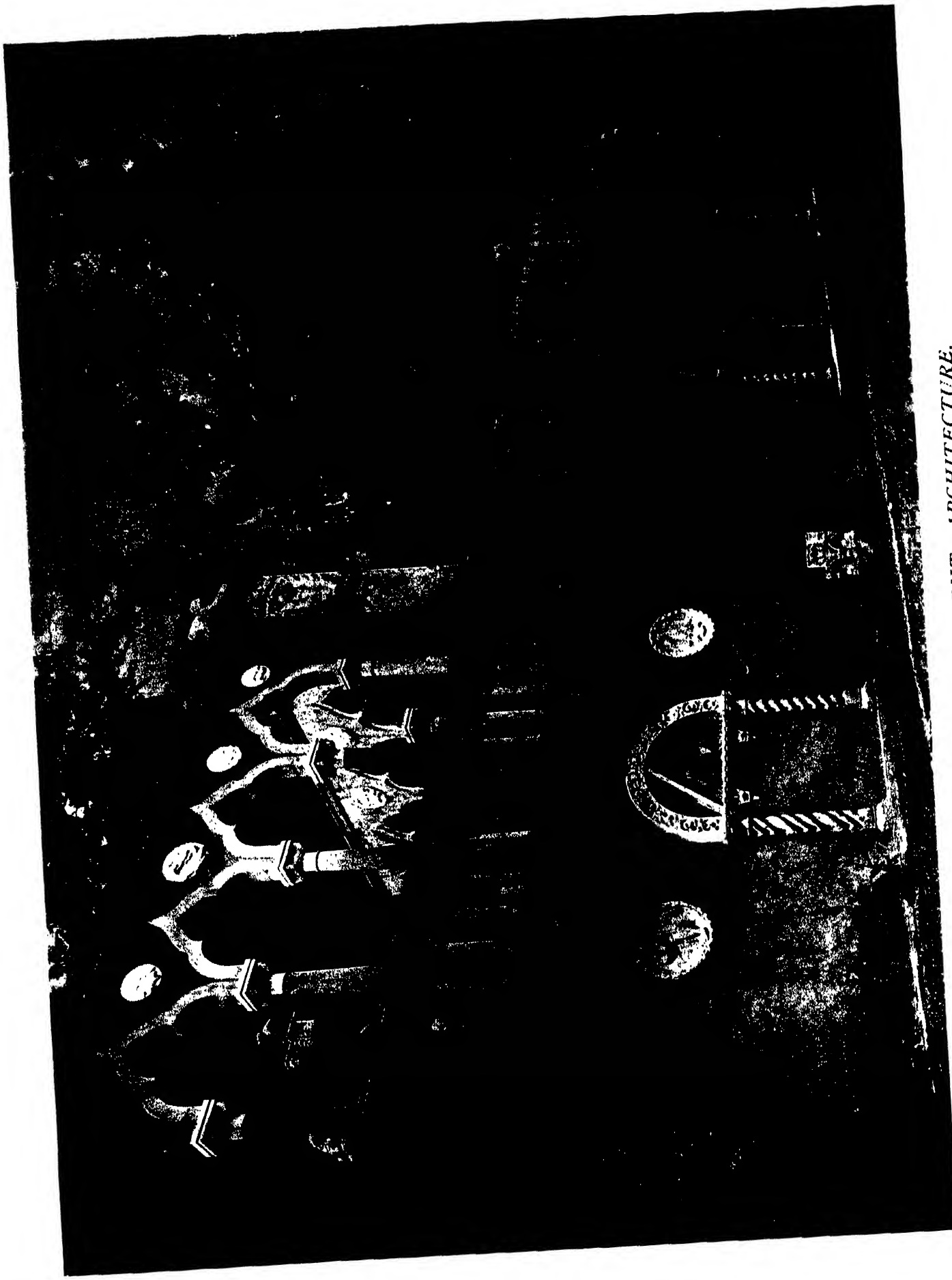
VILLA FABRICOTTI—LEVEL OF THE VILLA.

VILLA FABRICOTTI—THIRD STAIRWAY OF VILLA APPROACH.

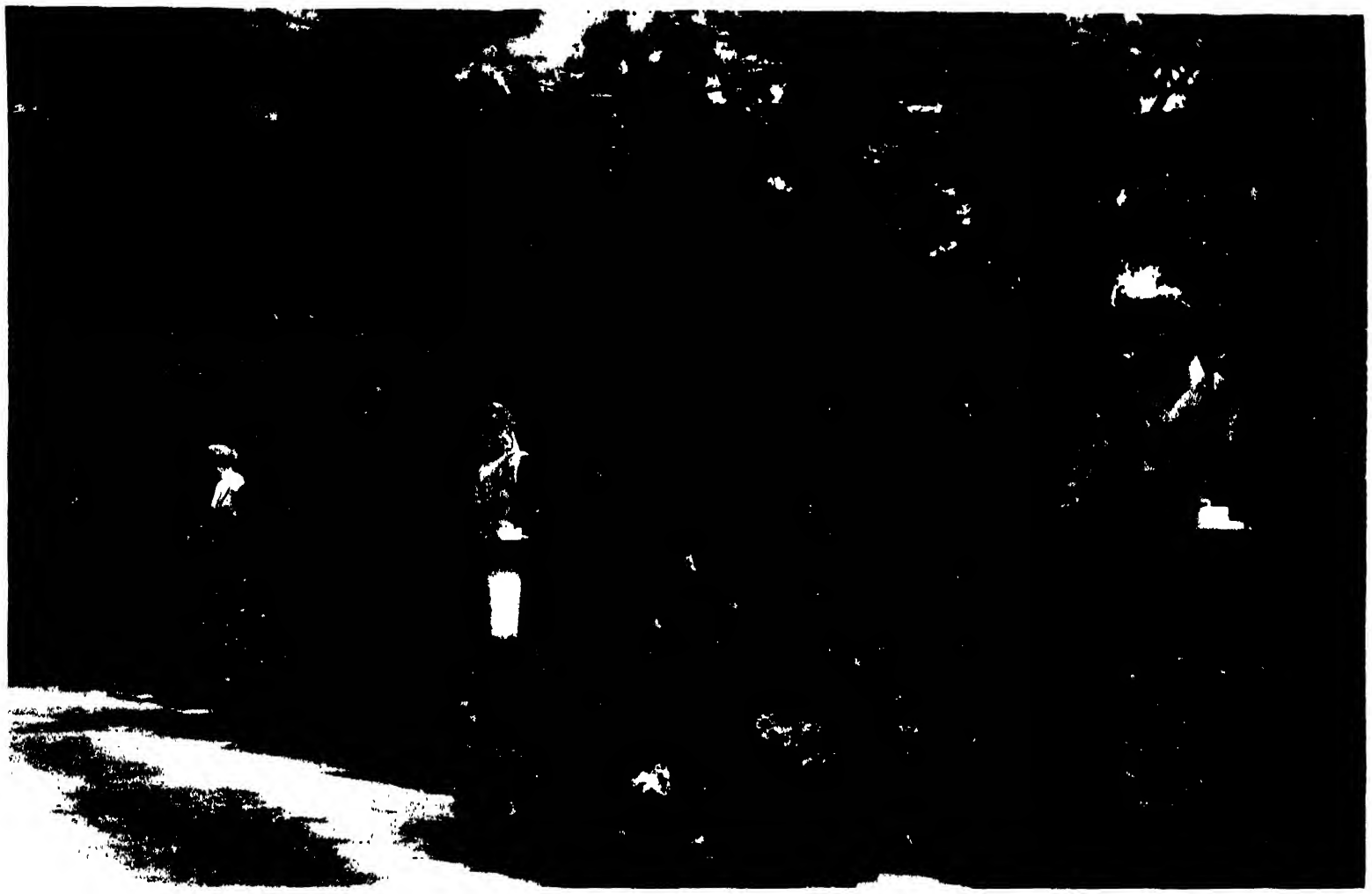


VILLA STIBBERT—THE TERRACE.

VILLA STIBBERT—THE GOTHIC TERRACE.

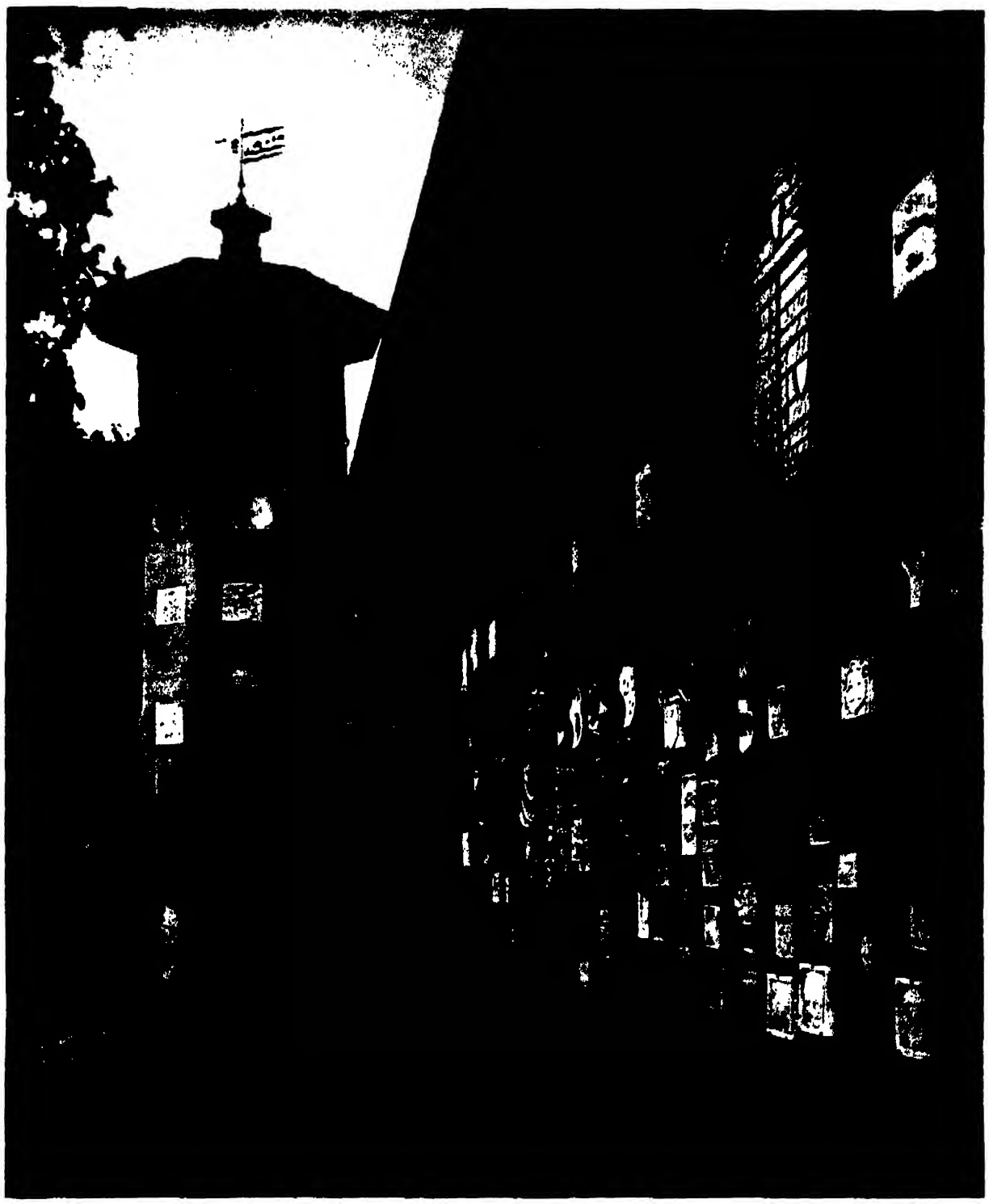


VILLA STIBBERT—ANCIENT ARCHITECTURE.



VILLA STIBBERT—SOUTH TERRACE.

VILLA STIBBERT—THE ILEX



VILLA STIBBERT—ANCIENT RELICS ON THE VILLA WALLS.

VILLA MONTALTO,

FLORENCE.

THIS villa stands high upon the hills, about three miles from Florence on the road to Ponte a Mensola. The greater part of the house is modern, but the ground on which it is built is full of interest and of old associations. The small house and farm, which are entered in old deeds as existing here in 1349, belonged to Dolce, the widow of Bindo Buonaveri, a noble Florentine, and were sold by her to a sister of Cenni di Giotto, a relation of Florence's first great painter. In the fifteenth century one Valori owned the place. It was part of the grounds of his large villa near, where he was visited by Pico della Mirandola, Poliziano, Marsilio Ficino, Lorenzo himself, when all that brilliant company were gathered at Villa Medici on the neighbouring slopes. In 1559 it was bought by Giacomo di Fea, the second husband of Catherine Sforza, and nine years later it was resold to the Baron del Nero. The little house was arched and frescoed and given a sixteenth century loggia, and the western front is still that of the old villa of the Del Nero, but it suffered considerably from the earthquake of 1895, at which time it belonged to Mr. Hall, an Englishman, and then Count Fritz von Hochberg bought it from Mr. Hall's widow, and turned it into the magnificent place it now is. The Count was his own architect and landscape gardener, and the result of his planning is so successful that we feel that posterity owes him a debt of gratitude for a real attempt to create and hand down a really beautiful Italian garden. Count von Hochberg, who is a brother of Prince Henry of Pless, sold the villa last year to Lord Mexborough.

Mrs. Ross, in a detailed account of the villa, mentions that when the Count recast the interior of the building, he found pieces of fine old sculptured friezes, portions of columns and ancient capitals built into the wall, and that above the stone vaults were remains of old carved wooden ceilings with traces of painting. The present interior has beautiful stucco-work, much of which is copied from Sans Souci, and fine old pictures of fruit and flowers are let into the walls.

The garden shows what may be done with a clever gardener, intelligence, taste, and ample resources, in the bounteous climate of Tuscany. The rose-garden is a very feast of colour in the springtime. Five hundred varieties of roses are collected together and bloom in glorious profusion —a mass of colour and perfume. The formal garden is laid out with fountains and statues and quaint spirals of box, masses of flowers bloom along the terraces, or overflow from great vases, and are reflected in stone-bordered tanks. It is almost impossible to believe that six years ago no trace of this garden existed, but the *podere*, or farm land, with artichokes, olives, and Indian corn, grew up to the walls of the dwelling-house. The fine Belvedere, of which there is an illustration, has a magnificent outlook over the purple distance, and all round lie white villas set in cypresses and olives. The view extends from Vallombrosa on the one hand to Carrara on the other, and at your feet lies Florence with its dome and towers. Just below are the machicolated walls of Poggio Gherardo, with the tower which Sir John Hawkwood stormed. To the left are the turrets of Vincigliata. On the hillside lies the village of Settignano, and the house where Michael Angelo passed his boyhood.

SOUTH TERRACE.

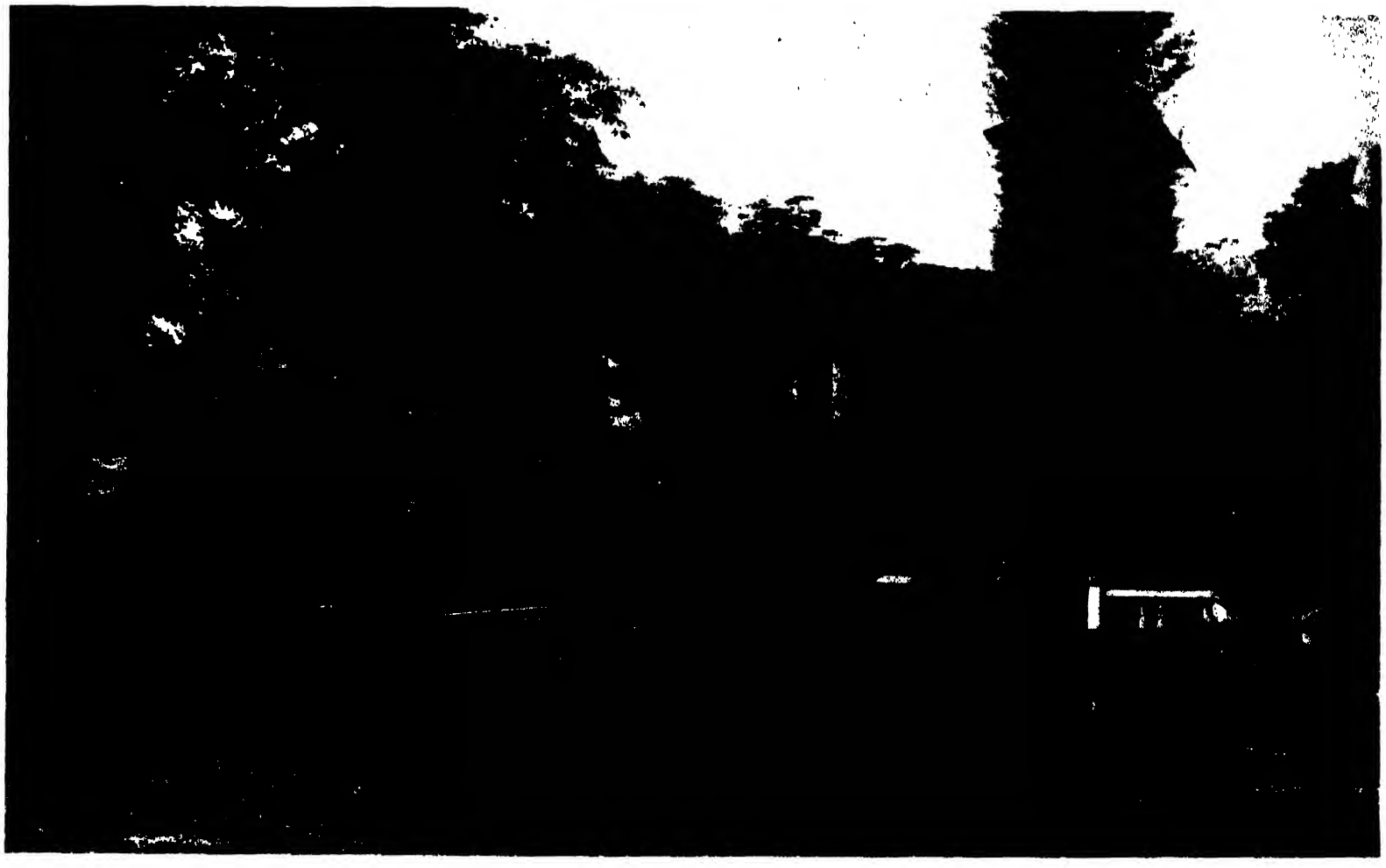
SCENE FROM WEST TERRACE.

VILLA MONTALTO.

GATEWAY ON WEST TERRACE.

VILLA MONTALTO.

SLOPE ON THE SOUTH OF VILLA.



PERGOLA AND POND.